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Lovell's Modern Novelists' Series

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TO BEDLAM
AND
BACK AGAIN

BY
Frank Houghton

NEW YORK

LOVELL BROTHERS & COMPANY

142, 144, 146 AND 148 WORTH STREET

FRANK
HOUGHTON

To
Bedlam
and
Back
Again

Lovell's
Modern
Novelists'
Series.

TO BEDLAM
AND BACK AGAIN

AND

OTHER STORIES

FRANK HOUGHTON

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Major novels

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NEW YORK
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THE INHERITANCE OF THE REVEREND ALGERNON NORTH.

IN the picturesquely situated little village of Worthing occurred a certain event, or rather chain of events, which culminated so surprisingly, as to cause much talk and excitement among the inhabitants.

Worthing is a peaceful, sleepy little village with a population of about one thousand sleepy inhabitants. On the morning of the 3d of August, 1885, an excited crowd gathered about the door of old Healy's hotel. Across the road and opposite Healy's is the office of the village attorney, Mr. John Nesbitt, a pale-faced, bright-eyed, delicate looking little man of about thirty-five years of age. While the crowd talked and gesticulated, Mr. Nesbitt sat at his window, and spliced a fishing-rod. Business that morning, to use his own term, "was slack." With him it generally "was slack," still he managed to make both ends meet, and it was a conundrum how he did so,—but that's neither here nor there. He glanced across the road, muttered "Another drunk I suppose," and continued his splicing. Five minutes elapsed, he finished a joint, and looked out again.

Old Ben Hazleton was speaking, the rest looked awed, and listened. John Nesbitt laid his rod aside, picked his hat from the floor, where it was generally hung, covered his sparse locks with it and hastened across the road.

Ben Hazleton finished speaking ere the attorney arrived, the crowd chewed tobacco, smoked, and expectorated in solemn silence, several slunk into the bar, and in choked accents requested three fingers o' gin.

Mr. Nesbitt felt curious.

"What's up," he inquired of a cadaverous looking individual in a wide-awake.

"The parson's niece," he replied in a hushed tone.

"What of her?"

"Murdered—found dead back o' the big clearin', throat cut, an' her little hands a' full o' flowers."

Mr. John Nesbitt was horrified, and expressed himself accordingly. The person who committed the dastardly deed was not discovered, at least not then.

That was the first event in the chain.

Gradually the village of Worthing subsided into its normal state of stagnation.

The second event was much the same. It occurred two years later,—curiously enough, on the same day of the same month. This time the victim was a boy,—his throat too was cut.

Strenuous but unavailing efforts were made to discover the author of the crimes. The village was in

a panic. The old women gossiped, dreamt dreams, saw visions, "were tuk with the shakes," and generally behaved as uneducated, superstitious, elderly females do under such circumstances. The Rev. Algernon North, a giant in stature, a trained athlete, and a double first of Oxford, preached a wonderful sermon on the sacredness of human life and the awful and terrible crime of taking it, so replete with classical allusion, that in all likelihood not a member of his congregation could appreciate it, excepting, possibly, the attorney ; but as luck would have it, he was absent fishing, so that it was lost to him.

And now for the third event,—which is the event.

* * * * *

At the close of a warm day in July, in the year 1888, Mr. John Nesbitt sat in his office chewing a lead pencil, and with bent brows gazing fixedly on a sheet of paper covered with hastily scrawled memoranda and figures. The desk before him, instead of the law books and other insignia of an attorney one might expect to see there, was covered with cartridges, odd joints of fishing-rods, fly-books, tobacco pipes, "Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour" in two volumes, and Izaak Walton's "Complete Angler." On a sheet of cork was carefully pinned a Lunar moth, a *Cecropia*, and one of those pretty brown butterflies known as "a morning cloak." In an old pickle bottle, containing spirits of wine, was an excellent specimen of the common garter snake in the act of swallowing a toad, the hind legs of which projected from its mouth. Behind the desk lay in-

discriminately piled a dozen or so volumes on law,—his library.

On that day of July, as on that day of August above mentioned, business “was slack,”—was it any wonder?

The sheet of paper on which Mr. Nesbitt's attention was fixed, contained an accurate account of his professional earnings during the two last months of May and June, amounting in all to \$73.12, of which \$20.00 was still owing and likely to be for some time, for his debtor had died insolvent the week before. It was certainly not encouraging; his professional soul was filled with a professional hunger. He sighed, yawned, and finally laid down his pencil. Fortunately for Mr. Nesbitt he resembled in one respect Mr. Longfellow's village blacksmith,—“he owed not any man.”

Besides an abhorrence of debt, a limited library, and the above mentioned little etceteras, he possessed three personal qualities, namely, a very soft voice, astonishing presence of mind, and splendid courage; and, as is generally the case with such characters, had not the remotest idea that he possessed any of the three. In fact, he looked upon himself as the most timid man alive; the very flutter of a petticoat covered him with confusion, while the mere thought of being left alone in a room with one of the fair sex, overpowered him with a dismay pitiable to witness. After this it will perhaps be needless to add that Mr. John Nesbitt was a bachelor, with fair chances of remaining one.

Mr. Nesbitt leant back in his chair, and for the space of at least ten seconds contemplated the ceiling ; then he spoke.

“One of two things is clear,” he said, “either I do not suit the profession of law, or the profession does not suit the district.”

His eyes wandered from the ceiling and over the table before him, rested on the “Complete Angler,” and brightened.

“I will follow that charming philosopher’s footsteps,” he exclaimed, “and go fishing.”

There came a loud knocking at the door.

“Thomas, I suppose,” he murmured softly, adding in a louder tone, “come in.”

Enter a large, black-bearded, hearty looking man clad in home-spun.

“Ah, Tom, my boy, knew it was you ; glad to see you, have a pipe.”

“Thank you.” Thomas filled one and seated himself.

“And how are you ?—haven’t seen you for a week of Sundays.”

“Well,” Thomas lighted his pipe, stretched his long legs out, and added, “How’s law ?”

“Don’t mention it, dear boy.”

The large arrival eyed his companion.

“John,” he said, “you should chuck it.”

“I mean to, for a day or two,” Nesbitt laughed. Thomas grunted.

“And you, my friend,” continued Nesbitt, “will

chuck the time-honored occupation of husbandry, and we shall go a-fishing."

To make a long story short the following afternoon away they went. Now the village of Worthing is built on the banks of the South River, about three miles from its junction with the Ottawa, at which point Mr. Nesbitt and Thomas made their camp for the night.

Shortly after sunset the latter, leaving his friend busily employed washing up the dishes, started off in his canoe, to set some night-lines. Twenty minutes passed, and Nesbitt, his work finished, sat puffing an old T. D. and gazing abstractedly into the camp fire.

There came a sound of a canoe, or boat, grounding on the shore.

"That old noodle Thomas has forgotten something, I suppose." Nesbitt smiled placidly.

A moment later, a tall figure showed black against the evening sky, it approached the camp fire, and the flames lit up the face. Mr. John Nesbitt rose to his feet, with an exclamation of surprise, for, instead of his friend, he recognized the Rev. Algernon North.

"Mr. North!" he exclaimed, "this is a pleasant surprise."

Mr. Nesbitt's greeting was hearty. Though he seldom went to church, preferring to spend his Sundays in the open air, he admired and liked the stalwart young rector, as every one did in the parish.

The Rev Mr. North seemed to be in a state of suppressed excitement, his eyes looked big and unnatu-

rally bright in the firelight ; his companion's remarks he answered at random. He fidgeted about for a few minutes, then suddenly sat down before the fire and began speaking.

“ Opportunity, temptation, and ungoverned will-power,” he said, “ lead a man into the performance of deeds shocking in the extreme, that is to men whose minds are warped by the conventionalities of the times ; why is it we can look with calmness upon the death-struggles of a deer, for instance, while our hearts are torn, our eyes dimmed by the contemplation of one of our fellow-creatures dying. Is not a deer as much one of God's creatures as you or I?—did not the same loving care watch over both?—I ask you, Mr. Nesbitt, why this is? ”

“ Really, Mr. North, I am afraid I have never gone sufficiently into the subject, to enable me to give you a satisfactory answer.” Nesbitt had not come out camping to be drawn into an argument on moral philosophy ; discussion, curiously enough, though a lawyer, he detested, the fact being that he was lazy.

The clergyman rested his chin upon his hand, and gazed dreamily into the fire: to all outward appearance his excitement had passed away.

“ Ah, that is the way,” he said, as though speaking to himself, “ realities fail to interest, what is vital has no signification.” Then he looked curiously at his companion, “ I wonder if what I am going to tell you will chain your attention? ”

Nesbitt murmured something polite, and with difficulty suppressed a yawn.

"In the eyes of the law I am" he hesitated.

Nesbitt, in the act of poking the fire, paused, and glanced at the speaker, whose manner underwent a change. He became the clergyman all of a sudden, and spoke as though he were going through the Litany.

"It pleased God to take my dear niece from me, it pleased God to make me his humble instrument," the flames leaped up and lighted his face, the expression on it was sly,—fanatically cruel,—cunning,—horribly cunning!

"WHAT!" Nesbitt was all attention now, sitting bolt upright.

The Rev. Algernon raised his hand.

"A moment, my dear sir, I have not yet finished!" his tones were scriptural as ever,—"*she had a mole on her neck.*"

Nesbitt instinctively raised his hand to his own, his companion saw the action, and smiled.

"It is too late," he said, then he continued, "She was doomed, poor girl. I could not stand it, on three separate occasions I entreated her to cover it, I besought her to wear something about her throat. I would have begged her on my bended knees, but that was impossible; how could I, a minister of God, kneel to a woman? There is a respect due to the cloth, sir, which we must ever remember on the peril of our souls. I even went so far as to expend ten shillings and sixpence halfpenny on a silk handkerchief, which I presented to her, to cover that abomi-

nable mole. What more could I do, what more could any man do? I appeal to you, Mr. Nesbitt."

"Nothing, sir, nothing." Nesbitt's voice was peculiarly low,—his face was pale,—he still held his pipe between his lips, but it had gone out.

"Then that fatal 3d of August came; she brought me a loaf of home-made bread from her mother's in the morning. I walked with her to the garden gate, and kissed her good-bye there."

"Kissed her good-bye!" The repetition came from Nesbitt's white lips, ere he was well aware of his utterance.

"And what if I did? I was her uncle, a minister of God, one of the great army."

Nesbitt for a moment forgot the horror of the situation; scorn of the man before him drove all thought of self for the instant away; mechanically he took his pipe from his mouth.

"Iscariot kissed our Saviour," he murmured.

The Rev. Algernon sprang to his feet and commenced pacing up and down. Nesbitt watched him like a cat. He came to a halt before him.

"Where is the parallel?" he exclaimed excitedly. "For heaven's sake, man, be just and listen."

Nesbitt affected unconcern.

"I'm sick of the subject," he said, "let us change it," and he prayed God that Tom would only return. The man before him stamped his foot.

"Sir, I demand your attention."

Nesbitt shrugged his shoulders.

“As you will,” he said. The Rev. Algernon continued :

“ As I told you, I kissed her at the gate, she turned away smiling. I saw the mole on her white neck, and almost shrieked. Then I rushed into my study, locked myself in, and wrestled with my temptation, even as Jacob wrestled with the angel. I called to mind all the holy men who had lived and conquered self. Still an irresistible impulse seemed urging me to follow. I wept scalding tears. I threw myself on my knees, and called on God in His mercy to hold me. My prayers, my tears, seemed unavailing. In an agony of mind I turned to my Bible for succour. I opened it and read :

“ ‘ And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah : and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.’

“ Then a great calm fell upon me. I knew that it was God’s will. I took a sharp knife from a drawer in my desk, hid it in my sleeve, and followed.”

Nesbitt shuddered. “ I beg that you will spare me the details,” he exclaimed.

The clergyman bowed with a gesture of assent.

“ They are quite unnecessary,” he said ; then he turned to Nesbitt with an air of well-bred courtesy, “ I am not boring you, I hope ? ”

“ Not at all, sir, not at all.” The hideous farce of such politeness did not strike him at the time. The Rev. Algernon continued :

“ Then, two years followed. Every man, woman

and child I met in that time—I glanced first at their throat. I began to think that I would not be called upon again. I was wrong, however. On the thirteenth day of July, 1887, I was coming home from the Bryant farm by the path through the fields ; I had reached that clump of butternuts by the ruined cottage,—I dare say you know the place ? ”

“ Perfectly,” Nesbitt replied.

“ On the highest limb of one of the tallest trees a squirrel sat chattering excitedly. I soon discovered the cause of its alarm. Beneath the tree that young rascal, Joe Andrews, stood with one of those obnoxious weapons, a catapult, taking pot shots at it. I chid the boy, expressing my horror at such wanton cruelty. He seemed touched by my words, and when I had finished speaking, turned and walked hurriedly away. As he did so I noticed, this time with a sacred joy, a brown mole on the side of his neck. On account of his extreme youth, I felt that he was entitled to a warning. I hastened after him. ‘ Joe,’ I said, when I had reached his side, ‘ life is sweet, you should keep your throat covered.’ ”

“ ‘ Sir,’ he said, looking at me with some slight astonishment, ‘ I have never had a sore throat in my life ; the boys would all laugh at me if I went about with red flannel round my neck in July.’ To which I replied, ‘ An ounce of prevention, my dear young friend, is infinitely better than a pound of cure ; red flannel is not necessary, white will answer the purpose equally well. Be a good lad, and do as I advise.’ I then bid him good-day and continued on along the

path to the village. Needless to say, my advice was not taken ; good advice seldom is. I met him twice again before the 3d of August. On that day I saw him enter the maple wood with his school books in a little bag on his back. I was standing at the door of my church at the time. I had been pruning my apple-trees all morning ; my pruning knife was in my pocket. I felt that the hour of sacrifice had come, and followed him with a religious joy impossible to describe.—The rest you know.”

Nesbitt nodded.

His companion stirred the fire, and heaped more wood upon it. Low in the western sky the crescent of a new moon hung like white foam upon a calm deep sea. A gentle breeze came from the river, rustling the willows, and fanning the leaping flames. The weird, lonely cry of a whip-poor-will broke the silence. It was a heavenly night, a night to think out great thoughts, to dream of love, and happiness, and hope fulfilled. How beautiful was life, how beautiful the earth, Nesbitt fully realized for the first time as he sat in that little circle of light, straining his ears to the utmost, listening in vain for the returning dip of his friend’s paddle.

The clergyman stood before him with a rapt expression in his eyes, gazing into space ; his lips moved.

“On such a night as this,” he exclaimed, with all a fanatic’s fervor, “I should long to lay down my earthly burden and be at rest. God, in His infinite love, is very gracious. My friend, I envy you.”

Nesbitt hardly heard the words, he was trying to pray ; he turned up his coat-collar.

The clergyman noted the action, and smiled gravely.

“ Too late, too late, my dear friend. Why hide the sacrificial sign ? You ought rather to rejoice in it,—God is good ! ”

“ Am I not entitled to a warning too ? ” Nesbitt murmured. “ Is the benefit of red flannel to be denied me ? — ‘ Life is sweet.’ ”

The Rev. Algernon shook his head ; for a few minutes he was silent ; then, seating himself, he began again to speak :

“ On the 24th day of September, 1790,—I have an excellent head for dates,—my great-grandfather, the Rev. Charles Algernon North, died in a lunatic asylum in England. By physicians he was declared insane—a homicidal maniac. He was no more mad than I am, he was simply God’s special instrument,—as I am,—and as such he sacrificed three persons—an old lady who had no earthly reason to wish her useless existence prolonged, a fat and dishonest butler, and a boy aged four years. His first sacrifice he performed at the close of his thirtieth year. He left one son, Percival Algernon North, who, on the completion of his Oxford career, was admitted into the ministry. Through the influence of the Duke of Norfolk he received an excellent living in Warwickshire, and in his twenty-fifth year married Katharine Montague, the daughter of a poor Suffolk baronet. In his twenty-sixth year, my father was born. In his

thirtieth, my grandfather, like his father before him, was seized with a religious enthusiasm ; he recognized in himself the special instrument of the Almighty, and by divine guidance sacrificed his cook. He, too, several years afterwards was declared insane, and died in his forty-second year in a London asylum. I now come to my own father. He, through the death of a relative, came into a small property in Kent ; in his twenty-third year he married, and ten days after my birth, in his thirty-fourth year, was thrown from his horse and killed.

“ In 1882, as you know, I, an ordained clergyman, took charge of this parish ; three years later, in my thirtieth year, a change came over me, enthusiasm took possession of me ; I longed to do something for the Creator of all things, who had done so much for me. One evening in the beginning of June, as I sat in my study, my dear niece came in, why I know not. I glanced at her throat, and noticed for the first time the little brown mole upon it. The rest you know. Then—then I recognized the divine goodness of God ; then I knew that to me had descended that glorious inheritance. Oh, Mr. Nesbitt, what poor worms we are ! how little we deserve the great blessings showered upon us with so prodigal a hand ! ” He rose to his feet with a strange and terrible fire in his eyes,—the fire of madness,—and stretched out his hand. Something bright which he held caught the light from the moon. IT WAS A KNIFE ! Nesbitt shuddered.

“ I, an unworthy wretch like myself,”—his voice

grew shrill and wild,—“am ordained His high priest! Think, I beseech you, think of Abraham and his willing son; look upon me as Abraham; think, oh think of the divine graciousness of God in having chosen you as an offering to His loving mercy!”

He paused. For a few moments there was silence. Nesbitt had risen to his feet, his eyes were rivetted on those of the madman before him,—a blessed sound smote his throbbing senses.

THE DIP OF A PADDLE!

The clergyman spoke again.

“What, thrice blessed among mankind, have you to live for?”

Possibly Nesbitt’s reply was weak, he hardly knew what he said, he was listening to that blessed sound.

“There—there is fishing in the summer,” he said in his soft voice, “and—and fair snipe-shooting in the autumn.”

He heard the grating of a canoe on the sand, as he finished speaking; his friend could not be more than thirty paces distant. The Rev. Algernon North heard nothing,—so intense was his frantic fervour.

“The hour has come,” he cried in the same shrill tones, paying no heed to Nesbitt’s reply, “thank God for His many blessings.”

Quick as a flash Nesbitt sprang back.

“Help, Tom, help, for God’s sake!” he shouted.

But he was not quick enough: the madman was upon him, like a cat upon a bird, and over they went together.

CRASH ! The firelight, the whirling stars, the awful eyes burning into his, faded on the instant.

* * * * *

“Where am I ?” It was Nesbitt who spoke. Tom was bending over him, with a look of anxiety on his rough, bearded face. Nesbitt thought it the most beautiful he had ever looked upon.

“ You’re all right, John, old fellow ; had a pretty close call, though.” He bathed his head with cool water.

In a few minutes Nesbitt sat up, none the worse except for a sore head where it had come in contact with a stone. Ten feet away lay the Rev. Algernon North bound hand and foot, snarling like a dog.

In the scuffle he had dropped his knife. At Nesbitt’s cry for help his friend had flown to his assistance, to find him prone upon his back, motionless, with a man sitting on his chest, groping about on the ground for something. A smashing blow from the paddle which Tom carried, and the tables were turned : the madman lay senseless beside his intended victim.

The little village of Worthing was all agog next day. Their rector was brought home, tied up like a turkey. Conversation flourished for a fortnight, then a new shepherd took charge of the flock ; he was not a double first of Oxford, but he was, comparatively speaking, sane. Mr. Nesbitt had the sacrificial sign removed from his neck by the village surgeon. He still endeavors to live by the practice of his profession, and he is still an enthusiastic dis-

ciple of Izaak Walton. In the autumn he has fair snipe-shooting.

On the tenth day of June, of the year 1892, the Rev. Algernon North, with his inheritance, died in a madhouse.

THE NEW BOSS.

CARSON was the new foreman ; he took charge of Flanigan's gang, after Flanigan had been scattered over an acre or two, trying to tamp a load of black powder with a steel drill, and he ran that cut in a way that came pretty near breaking down the health of all hands.

The "boys" thought he was soft when he first came, because he was civil and quiet-spoken and wasn't "eternally ripping round and raising particular hell," as Flanigan had been so fond of doing ; but they got rid of that idea before long. Then they got disgusted and tried to shirk, and cursed the teams, and Nippers, and the wide, wide world, and speculated as to whether Carson took them for dogs or "Niggers," and would like him to understand that they were neither ; but they didn't tell him so. Then they settled down to work.

As a rule, green hands have to show of what metal they are made, when they attempt to "boss" a gang of roughs. They have to establish their footing. Carson was no exception to the rule : he established his with a pick-handle, and established it so firmly that no one ever again thought of questioning his capability of maintaining it.

His men were decidedly mystified with regard to him ; they discussed him from every possible stand-point—and a good many impossible ones.

The walking-boss remarked to the section engineer in the hearing of Nippers, that there was “plenty of sand on his neck” ; but he did not explain the term, though, judging from the expression of his eye, which was happy at the time, it is likely a compliment was intended.

The other foremen on the division hated him cordially—they had reason. Where they averaged a yard and three-quarters of rock-excavation per man a day—assisted largely by profanity—he averaged two, without assistance of the above-mentioned explosive. In fact, they took it so deeply to heart that one fine Sunday morning a deputation of one—a very large one—waited on him at his camp, and discussed rock-excavation in a manner not treated of by Mr. Wellington, Mr. John C. Trautwine or any other leading light, waxed abusive rather than scientific, and withdrew hurriedly, followed three feet from the door of Carson’s shanty by Carson’s boot, and a rapturous round of applause from Carson’s gang. No further deputation appeared, they contented themselves with fervent prayers that he would follow Flanigan’s lead and “help manure the country.”

Then the gang boomed him !

The following Friday, Nippers ran foul of a choleric German, who resented the familiarity with so heavy a hand that it is altogether likely had

Nippers' mamma seen him afterwards she would not have recognized her boy. It was certainly brutal. Nippers was twelve years of age, and delicate. The German was three times as old, and diabolically healthy.

Unfortunately for the alien, Carson appeared at the close of the performance, and in five minutes sent him upon his way with a hungry longing for his fatherland, and a distaste for railroad construction hitherto unknown.

Nippers worshiped his avenger from that day.

Then the gang boomed Nippers. They said he was "a gritty little pup," and cursed the German with a brimstone magnificence.

Carson, by the way, was a tall fair man, with gray-blue eyes, and a remarkably determined chin. Excepting to give an order, he seldom or never addressed his men. Where he came from, or who he was, nobody knew, and there was an indescribable something about him that deterred the inquisitive from asking, though it was reported that the walking-boss had put a leading question, when by way of reply Carson had merely looked at him and asked for a match, that his questioner grinned, handed him one, and softly murmuring, "Well, I'll be damned," rode on.

The section engineer, too, noticed Carson, and was puzzled by his appearance and manners,—for it is a little out of the common to discover a man in charge of a rock-cutting with the speech and appearance of a gentleman,—questioned his rodman, a

young man fresh from college who, as is generally the case with that class, was too deeply absorbed in the marvellous working of his own inner consciousness to notice any outside thing or person, and in consequence could give but little help in solving the mystery.

The Line Doctor was the next man whom Carson astonished. The doctor was a little bright-eyed individual, with a weakness for botany, and a genius for losing his way. Between twelve and one o'clock on a certain Wednesday, Carson heard a distant and lugubrious hallooing, then several pistol shots, then more hallooing. The sounds came from the woods to the north of the cutting, half a mile or so away, so he walked in the direction a hundred yards, and shouted : "Hullo there!" in a voice that shook the poplar leaves.

"Hullo—hi—help!" came in answering wail.

Carson started in the direction at a run, clearing fallen timber like a cariboo, and in fifteen minutes sighted the doctor, seated on a fallen log, with his hat beside him, his revolver in one hand, and a rare species of fern held tenderly in the other.

"Sir," said the doctor, pocketing his revolver, with a fond glance at the fern, "I am lost."

Carson grunted.

"Hopelessly lost," reiterated the doctor.

"The Line is barely half a mile from here," said Carson.

"And supposing it were fifty miles from here, sir, my anxiety of a few moments back, with regard to

my safety, is more than compensated. I have found this!" holding up the fern, "a very rare species; I am positively doubtful of its name."

Carson looked at it, smiled, named it.

"WHAT!" shouted the doctor.

Carson repeated what he had said.

"You're the foreman at No 3 Camp?" gasped the doctor.

Carson nodded, and, pulling out his pipe, began leisurely to fill it.

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the doctor, staring at Carson in wide-eyed astonishment, "you a botanist?"

Carson shrugged his shoulders.

"I must be getting back to work, the dinner hour's up," he said.

The doctor followed him, flabbergasted.

Shortly after this "things"—to use a railwayism,—became interesting. A priest called at the shanty. He looked pious,—oh, very pious. Suspended by a short strap from his shoulder hung a prodigious valise or satchel, which he was pleased to inform Carson merely contained "the bread of life," in the form of hymn-books, prayer-books, and tracts,—the latter sulphurous. The tracts he handed about among the men, giving one to Carson with appropriate words, and upward glance, savoring somewhat of Kingdom Come.

Carson watched him curiously for a few moments, then, with the tract in his hand, withdrew into the shanty, where he tore a strip from it for a spill with

with which to light his pipe, thrust it into the fire, where it burst so suddenly into a blaze as to attract his attention. He examined what remained ; it was damp ; he smelt it, whistled, called Nippers.

“Smell it,” he said. Nippers did so, looked up interrogatively.

“It’s from the priest,—Father McCool,” said Carson.

“GUM !” ejaculated Nippers, “It must be leakin’ its—”

“Shut up !” said Carson.

Nippers did so—like a mouse-trap.

“Nippers,” said Carson, “could you follow the Father and find out where he will stay to-night ?”

“Could I ?” said Nippers with prodigious scorn, and stood upon his toes.

“Without letting the Father know you’re watching him ?”

“Guess so.”

“And come back and tell me ?”

“Easy’s rollin’ off a log.”

“Then go and do it.”

Away went Nippers with a swelling breast.

Carson sat down and smoked his pipe. Half an hour passed away. Bill Scully came in,—informed Carson that Father McCool was going to hold mass, intimated the “hankerin’,” his soul felt after “spiritool” comfort, and “guessed he’d go if Carson hadn’t no objections.” He smiled sweetly, he had no objections. Sam O’Rórk, Cisco Jimmy, Black George, and Sandy Mack came in : they too had discovered the

same "hankerin," Carson's smile grew sweeter—very much sweeter ; they might all go, "Confession is good for the soul." Accordingly, away they all went. Carson rose to his feet, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and started for Bisco. Arrived there he got sworn in as a special constable and returned. The smile still lingered about his lips ; his frame of mind might be described as heavenly.

At seven o'clock that evening enter Nippers. His air was mystery itself ; success sat upon his brow.

" Well ?" said Carson.

" Nailed the sucker," replied Nippers, with pardonable pride.

" Indeed ! " Carson looked af him.

" At the ole shack,—d'ye mind the cross-layin' ? " Carson nodded.

" Well t'other end o'it back o' the clearin, where they was takin', square timber out last winter,—ye mind the ole skidway ? "

" Yes. "

" His nibs was stanin' at it, an' all han's round."

" Surely not the Italians ? "

Nippers shook his head.

" At prayers ? "

" Prayers ! " Nippers started.

Carson took his pipe from his mouth and laughed.

" Now go to the cook, and tell him I sent you for your grub."

Towards midnight the men returned—gloriously drunk !

At four o'clock the following morning Carson sud-

denly sat up in bed. "By the lord Harry ! it is he !" he exclaimed. Then he rose, dressed himself by the light of a tallow dip, put a 38-calibre Smith-and-Wesson into his pocket, noiselessly raised the latch of the shanty door, and passed out into the starlight.

At six he returned for his breakfast ; he appeared dissatisfied. The men straggled in one by one ; they did not look as though mass had entirely agreed with them.

That morning Carson spoke again to Nippers.

"The bird has flown," he said.

"Sir ! "

"His holiness has taken his departure,—Father McCool's gone."

"Gone ?" Nippers looked blank.

"Yes, I was at the shanty by a quarter to five,—it was empty."

"Holy Doodle !" ejaculated Nippers, "it do beat the band."

II.

THREE evenings, sometimes four, and every Sunday afternoon in the week, Carson would walk away in the direction of Bisco, and not return till late at night. The gang thought nothing of this : they put it down to a "hankerin' after solitood." Nippers did, however, and pondered. Ever since the German escapade he had established himself as Carson's faithful retainer. In the morning and evening he brought him water for his daily ablutions : every three or four days he spread fresh balsam brush on his bed : at "dinner hour" he made to ast for him. Nippers' toast was perfection,—done with a birch fork over glowing coals, crisp, brown, so that it crackled nicely between the teeth, neither too much nor too little. (To make toast as it should be made is a nice art.) As a rule, Carson seemed oblivious of these little attentions. Occasionally, he thanked him with a smile, then Nippers was supremely happy, and for the remainder of the day would wake the echoes of that desolate country with rollicking railroad ditties, at the full pitch of his boyish treble, as he carried the drills to and fro between the blacksmith's and the cutting. In his opinion there never had been such another as Carson.

One evening Nippers made a discovery. He had

been sent to Bisco to buy a monkey-wrench ; there he met a youth of his own age whom he knew. There was mutual joy at the meeting. Nippers eulogized the "new boss" in a rippling stream of variegated profanity, and treated the youth to "black-strap," who responded with dismal murmurings at his own hard luck, "never to strike no soft snap."

The afternoon passed all too quickly away, and before Nippers was aware of the fact, much to his horror, the sun had set. Bidding his friend a hasty farewell, he took a short cut over a hill by a rough trail, which shortened the distance to camp half a mile.

The way was lonely, the shadows between the jack-pines very black, the tall rampikes looked gaunt and spectral in the fading light of evening. Hungry bears wandered amongst those solitudes. Nippers was an imaginative youth ; he felt, to use his own expression "mighty skeery." Every rustle in the dead leaves, as some wood-mouse scurried over them, set his heart thumping against his ribs. He hurried silently along, peering into the gathering gloom, restrained only by a boyish pride from taking to his heels and running. He had gone about half the distance, and was just turning a sharp bend in the trail, when the sound of some one speaking, not more than twenty feet distant, brought him to an abrupt halt. It was a woman's voice. The tones were low, passionately tender, but clear to Nippers' thrilling senses as a bell. Such a voice he had never heard before. He listened spellbound.

“Dearest, dearest, you must not,” came the words. “Sweetest, I entreat,—Edward, listen to me. As surely as there is a God in heaven, as surely as you love me,—if you do love me?—if this passion is love?—you will be sorry—sorry to your dying day. Edward, I implore,—see, I go upon my knees. Sweetest, I beg—you swore you loved me—can you love me and refuse me? Oh—oh—oh!” She was weeping now. Nippers was in an agony.

“Come, come, my lovely Kate, don’t be foolish,—get up, my angel,—do you think that I can’t take care of myself, you silly girl?”

Nippers almost jumped out of his skin! He knew that voice. He started so violently as to snap a dry branch on which he was standing.

“Nippers!” It was Carson who spoke. “What on earth are you doing here?” Nippers felt inclined to blubber; he longed to die.

“Oh, please, sir, I—I went to Bisco for a—a—monkey—a monkey-wrench,” he stammered balancing himself first on one leg, then on the other. He stole a frightened glance at the boss, who—Nippers wondered if he could be dreaming—was watching him with a most decided suspicion of a smile. He felt reassured. “Please, sir, Bill’s waitin’ for the wrench. Mayn’t I go?”

Then a vision appeared, so it seemed to the boy, and stood by Carson’s side—a vision with a dark shawl about her shoulders, and great masses of red brown hair, all dishevelled, and eyes,—such wonderful blue eyes, beneath brows as straight as a line—eyes

that seemed to look the boy through, and dazzled him. Her age might have been twenty-five, possibly a year or two more.

"The boy'll have a nice story to tell," she said petulantly.

Carson laughed, and passed his arm about her waist.

"Not he ; he'll never mention anything he has seen or heard,—will you, Nippers?"

"Never,—s'elp me!" was the prompt reply.

"Now you may go."

And away he went, rejoiced at getting off so easily. Arrived at camp, he "sneaked" a supper from the cook, then betook himself to the isolation of a red-pine stump, seated himself upon it, tucked his knees up under his chin, clasped his thin grimy little hands about them, and as the stars came out, one by one, waking, dreamt of that cloaked vision, and, may be, wove a childish romance out of what he had seen and heard.

Meanwhile Carson and his companion walked slowly back towards Bisco. Arrived at the edge of the clearing in which the village stood, Carson seated himself on a log, motioning the woman to a seat by his side, but she remained standing before him. He looked up at her and smiled, and taking her hand in his, kissed it. She drew it from him and passed it through his hair, lovingly, then allowed it to fall behind his head ; her arm, bare to the elbow, rested warm about his neck.

"Strange," he said, looking at her thoughtfully,

“ I have never yet seen your father, he seems to be always away,—always up the line looking for some mythical contract. I am positively beginning to look upon him as a myth, and to believe you came down from heaven, my sweet, to be the joy of my life.”

She looked down at him and smiled,—her smile was intoxicating.

It was a dangerously beautiful night in August, heavy with the scent of the balsam and the pine, and the woman stood before him in all the pride of her loveliness, her eyes like stars, courting conquest, yielding,—only to him.

“ What do you want with my father ? ” she murmured ; “ you have me.” The tone itself was a caress.

“ Yes,” he answered passionately, “ I have you,—you, my dear, my own,—and always shall. Come,”—he held his arms out to her,—“ how can I see those lovely eyes so far away ? Come, my angel.”

And as a wild bird flies to its mate in the spring-time, so she came—to her master ! Came with warm lips breathing love,—her glowing breast panting rapture,—her eyes on fire. He held her in his arms : “ Their lips were joined, their two souls, like two dewdrops, rushed into one,”—life and the world, heaven and earth, all were forgotten. And thus all that was worth a thought, a breath, each found in the other. O summer nights ! O shining stars ! how much have you to answer for ? How much love, and passion, and jealousy, and frail human

weakness, have you not serenely looked down upon? She, in the ripeness of her beauty, with more than most women's capacity for passion, was intended by nature to love and to be loved. To her Carson was a king among men,—a being without a flaw. Had he abused her she would have wept and grovelled to him; had he trampled upon her she would have kissed the adored foot that bruised her. Instead, he fondled, kissed, petted her, and she was transported. Paradise had nothing more to offer; her passion made her an idolater. When she prayed she forgot her God, and remembered only Edward Carson.

Two hours later that evening, as she sat in her room, dreaming, her head resting in her hand, there came a knock at her door. It was repeated ere she heard it. "Come in," she said.

Enter Father McCool!

She seemed to be expecting him; at any rate, she showed no surprise at his appearance. Upon the ample forehead of that reverend gentleman satisfaction had usurped the seat of piety. After closing and carefully bolting the door, he seated himself opposite her, and laughed: she had returned to her easy attitude, and pretended not to notice him, but her brows met, her foot gently tapped the floor. So far, not so much as a greeting had passed between them. At length he spoke.

"Well?" he said.

She glanced up at him, quick as light.

"Did you succeed?" he inquired, after another pause.

“No.”

The expression of satisfaction took to itself wings ; his holiness looked annoyed. He rose to his feet and began pacing the room.

“You said you could influence him.”

“Did I ?” Her foot beat a quicker tattoo.

Father McCool came to a halt by her side, and laid his hand upon her shoulder. “Kate,” he said, with an amiable smile, “you are a darned little fool.

She shrugged her shoulders without replying.

“He is the only man I am at all afraid of,” he continued ; “the others are idiots, pure and simple. You must persuade him,—there was never a man in love with a woman yet who could not be twisted round her little finger, provided she tried,—you must try again.”

She remained obstinately silent. The father looked down at her, and the expression on his face was not pleasant.

“Do you hear me? You must try again, I say.”

“Yes, I hear you,” she replied ; her tone matched his expression, and was not pleasant. Then she raised her head, and resting her chin on her clenched hand, her elbow on her knee, looked at him. “Aren’t you running a risk coming to see me as you do ?” she inquired.

“I suppose I am, but in my particular line it is necessary to run risks.”

“To be candid,” she said slowly, “it has often puzzled me to know exactly what that particular line is ?”

Beyond a glance, he paid no attention to her remark.

"There's a big consignment coming up from Pembroke," he said. "Higgins is canoeing it up the Spanish with Bill, the half-breed."

"The half-breed!" she exclaimed; "he's a queer one to trust."

The priest laughed. "Do you think I can't trust Bill?—Bill of all people."

"He'll find out—he'd smell it a mile off."

"I don't think so."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"It's a camp outfit this time."

"Where will you receive it?"

"At the foot of the blind sny."

"And then?"

"I was thinking of the old shanty."

The woman rose to her feet, walked to the door, opened it, and looked out.

"Well?" said the priest when she had relocked it and returned.

She took a folded sheet of paper from her pocket, and handed it to him.

"Look at that," she said.

"A tract,—one of my own!"

"Smell it."

He did so, then glanced at her interrogatively.

"Do you detect anything?"

He nodded.

"It's very faint," she said.

"Yes, barely perceptible,—but—"

“I got that from him.”

“And where did he get it?”

“From you—that Sunday.”

“Not in this state?”

She nodded.

He burst out laughing. “What’s the use in lying?”

“Oh, very well.” She rose to her feet, strolled over to the window, looked out, and began whistling,—she whistled uncommonly well.

Father McCool sniffed the tract,—looked at her,—sniffed again.

“Kate.”

There was no reply. He took a plug of T. and B. from his pocket, cut and filled a pipe, lighted it, and again looked at her. She was still whistling.

“Kate.”

“I’m listening.” Her whistling ceased.

“Don’t be a fool.—Come and tell me all about this infernal tract.”

“You said I lied.”

“Did I?”

She nodded.

The priest laughed again. “I’ll take it all back,” he said. “But that Sunday was ten days ago—how could this retain the smell for such a length of time?”

“If you had asked me that first and waited for my answer, you might not have accused me of lying,” she replied, with a fine scorn. “I don’t lie. I wouldn’t be bothered.” While she spoke she

searched in a trunk which stood in a corner of the room for something, and at length unearthed a round tin jar with a lid that screwed on, rendering it air-tight, which she held out to the priest. "I kept it in that," she said.

He glanced at it.

"Yes," he replied indifferently. "Now let's hear what you were going to say."

She returned the tin to her trunk, and seating herself on the foot of her bed, began speaking.

"I was going to tell you that he has a mighty sharp boy there, who carries drills—and news. Who can see about as far into a stone wall as most boys can, and knows something more than his prayers." She paused.

"Well?" Father McCool looked interested.

"The boy worships him."

"He's not singular!" The father smiled.

Her face flushed crimsom.

"If you begin that again, I've finished," she said.

"I promise you I won't," said his reverence, laughing; "but first tell me how you came by that paper."

"He gave it to me."

"You wormed that much out of him, did you? Not so bad."

She flushed again, this time with anger—her eyes looked dangerous.

"He gave it to me, I said."

"With his confidence?"

She controlled herself by an effort. "If I am false to it—it is to save you."

"Much obliged, I'm sure. Go on; continue your interesting narrative."

"I will." She spoke with a too palpable sneer. "I did not wish to recur to a past which cannot be otherwise than painful to a person of your sensitive nature—"

"Beautiful!" interrupted the priest, slapping his leg with a laugh. "You remind me of that shrew of a woman, your mother. I don't envy the man that gets you."

She continued without paying attention to the interruption:

"It is absolutely necessary to do so, however: now if you will be so kind as to make the required effort, you may, possibly, be able to recall to mind those Michipicoten riots?"

"Of course. You're doing well, Kate. Go on—blab it out, old girl."

"And that insane shooting affair, after which the notorious Jim Andrews left so myster—"

"What's that got to do with this?" he interrupted. She held up her hand.

"It is only a preface," she replied, "necessary to a proper understanding of what follows. Of course he had to leave,—had they taken him he'd never have got away alive,—they were all mad, crazy, about it. I believe they'd have lynched him if—"

"What evidence had they?"

She stamped her foot,

"There was circumstantial evidence enough for that crowd to have strung a dozen men up, and you know that as well as I do."

"For God's sake, Kate, don't speak so loud."

"Then don't interrupt. Now he's seen Andrews half a dozen times, his memory's good for faces, he's hard up, there's \$2000 offered for Andrews' arrest,—the man Andrews killed was his friend. What do . . ."

"He doesn't know me!"

She rose to her feet with an exclamation of impatience.

"I've finished," she said.

"Go on, Kate,—go on, for heaven's sake. You're the darndest woman for flying off the handle I ever saw."

She turned to him again.

"Now look here—he's not the man to forgive the death of his friend in a hurry. Whether he knows you or not I can't say; but things have a nasty appearance, there are no two ways about that. He had a good sit at Michipicoten. Why did he leave immediately on the disappearance of Andrews? Can you tell me that?"

The priest shrugged his shoulders.

"Isn't it a little odd his appearing here two days after your arrival?"

"You seem to forget yourself, my dear."

"I don't forget myself—but—but I'm puzzled." She began pacing the room. "I tell you I don't like the look of things—he tells me much, but—not all. I do wish you would go!—Mercy!—were I a man

like you,"—she stopped in front of him and clenched her hand,—“ with your brains to plan, and your hands to work, I'd do something. I'd work like a man. I'd—I'd not run these hideous risks. Think what detection means,—oh, man, think ! But you won't. Oh, how foolish you men are : how vain, how wicked, how selfish ! You will not stop until it is too late : you go on and on and on with never a thought of the misery you bring to those who can feel. Perhaps when you have ruined my life, as you will ruin your own, perhaps then you will know remorse—but I doubt it. You are too cold, too unfeeling. What to you is the suffering, the disgrace, of one foolish weak woman, provided you gain your ends? —such despicable ends. Were it for something worth attaining I would sacrifice myself, yes, gladly—I have it in me ! ” She held up her head, her eyes blazed ; she looked as though she might do or dare a great deal. “ But no, you will stay in this vile hole, leading this hateful life, that no being worthy the name of man should lead.” She began her rapid pacing again. “ In what light will he see me when he finds out ? He will find out, there is no use telling me he won't,—I know it ; I feel it. Ah, how ungrateful ! Where is your generosity ? where is——”

“ Kate, I swear——”

She raised her hands with a despairing gesture.

“ Oh, how often have you sworn ? How easy it is to swear ! How many oaths have you broken ? Oh—oh—oh ! ” She covered her face with her hands and began weeping.

The priest looked uncomfortable.

“ After this consignment, Kate——”

“ Oh—oh ! ”

“ It’ll be the last, by heaven,—it’ll be the last, this time certain. I promised you I’d leave. Well, I will when I get this off my hands. What more can I do ? I must sell it now, or it’ll break me, then I’ll go and try something new—and respectable. There now will that satisfy you ? ”

She raised her tear-stained face.

“ He—he knows about the shanty—the b-boy followed you down—oh—oh ! —and came back and told him. He was there next morning at five. I—I won’t help you again. I’m not in it this time. You—you can play a lone hand. I don’t see why you ever dragged me into it, at all. Oh—why—why don’t you leave the——”

“ Kate.”

“ Don’t—don’t speak to me any more. I’m sick of it all. You are heartless, else you wouldn’t make me suffer as you do. What’s to become of me, oh—oh—oh ! — when he finds out ? Oh, my God ! ”

“ Kate, I insist upon being——”

She stamped her foot.

“ Oh, go away ; don’t—don’t—don’t speak to me again.” She threw herself on her bed.

The priest looked angrily at her ; he felt himself to be an ill-used, ill-judged man ; plainly she was in a temper.

“ Kate, you fool, I’ll see you again when you’ve come to your senses.” He unbolted the door, and passed out, drawing it gently to after him.

III.

A WEEK after the interview between Father McCool and Kate, Carson finished grading his cutting, and began the necessary preparations to work on another, a quarter of a mile or so further down the line, that is, nearer Bisco. There was a good deal of stripping to be done before they reached the rock, and the blacksmith's outfit would have to be moved.

Carson felt that he could dispense with Nippers' services during the day, and accordingly called him.

"Nippers," said he, "I'm growing tired of Chicago chicken."

Nippers grinned.

"Can you fire off a gun, Nippers?"

Nippers looked hurt.

"I will be more explicit. Could you hit a flock of barns?"

Nippers was deeply moved; he wondered why he had been called up to be insulted, and ejaculated: "Could I!" Nippers possessed in a remarkable degree a talent for condensation. In the above mentioned exclamation there spoke volumes.

"Then," said Carson, "take that gun of mine, some powder and shot, and shoot me a brace of grouse."

"A brace?"

"Two, Ignoramus."

"When must I come back, sir?"

"You may have the day."

Away he went, with a gun as tall as himself, his nose in the air, the proudest youth from Bisco to Pogomasing: past black George, who was sweating beneath a load of crowbars. Cisco Jimmy, whom he met next, he anathematized with a brisk volley of railwayisms, to be heard to be appreciated.

Bill, the blacksmith, his particular pal, he cut dead, and disappeared into the bush at the end of the embankment, with the strut of a game-cock, followed by an ironical howl from the afore-mentioned descendant of Vulcan.

From the end of the embankment an old disused trail led two miles south to the foot of Biscotasing Lake, followed it half a mile, and was lost in a second growth of poplar and birch.

Along this trail stalked Nippers, with watchful eye. He had not proceeded a hundred yards when—cluck—cluck—cluck—cluck—whir-r-r!—up rose a gamey old cock grouse and settled in a balsam, cocked its head, and contemplated Nimrod.

With a mighty effort the gun was raised; the barrel wavered an instant. The grouse became interested. Doubtless it had never seen so small a boy armed with so ponderous a weapon.

BANG! The goddess of flukes, herself, if there be such a deity, must have directed that shot. Nip-

pers certainly did not ; his eyes were closed. Down fell the grouse in a cloud of feathers ! Head over heels went Nippers into a bog !

Cluck—cluck—cluck—whir-r-r !—whir-r-r !

Up rose two more and settled, one in a hemlock, t'other in a spruce.

Nippers picked himself up ; there was blood in his eye,—he was muddy, bruised, determined. BANG !—BANG ! This time he kept his eyes open, his feet on *terra firma*, his gun comparatively steady.

Two more grouse were added to his bag. He tied them together with a string, hung them over his shoulder, and forward to fresh feasts ! A mile further, a fat hare sprang into the middle of the trail.

BANG !—away ran the hare, sound in wind and limb, followed by a remark coupled with an ejaculation that would have one credit to a railroad superintendent.

Nippers saw nothing more till he reached the shore of the lake, where he seated himself in the shade of a balsam for rest and refreshment.

In his pocket he had a doughnut, a lump of cheese, a slice of pork, and a hunk of bread. In his stomach, emptiness.

Nippers' education had been neglected—woefully. He ate the doughnut first, because it was sweetest ; secondly, the cheese, because he preferred it to pork ; thirdly, the pork and bread, because he was still hungry,—there was nothing else ; lastly, he dined in this order because—happy youth !—he was not

aware that he possessed a liver. His midday meal finished, he took from another pocket a remarkably old, remarkably dirty, clay pipe, boasting a good two inches of stem, and containing a heel of tobacco. Lighting this he leaned back, folded his arms, crossed his legs, and tried to imagine himself a western desperado after a dinner of grizzly-bear steak.

His imaginings were disturbed by the sound of voices and the stroke of a paddle. Round the nearest point a bark canoe, containing two men and a load, was approaching. When it was within fifty yards, Nippers, uttering an exclamation, ducked down out of sight behind a boulder. Within twenty yards of the boulder, on the farther side of a clump of bushes, was an old landing and camp-ground, for which the canoe was headed, and, to Nippers' dismay, the two men landed, and began unloading. He watched them take out six bales of blankets, next a large bundle which looked like a tent, then a small tent which they immediately pitched. Then the younger man of the two, who looked little more than a boy, remarked to the older :

“ You might cut some wood and light the fire, while I get the bacon sliced.”

The one addressed, with a grunt of acquiescence shouldered his axe and started off in the direction of a dry rampike. When he was fairly at work, and making noise enough to conceal the advance of a regiment, and the other was busy with the bacon, Nippers, on hands and knees, crawled away, till well out of hearing, then rising to his feet, started at a

brisk run for the shanty, where he arrived in due course, breathless and excited.

“Where’s the boss?” he inquired of the first of the gang he met, who happened to be an Italian.

“No here; p’raps up line.”

He rushed into the shanty. The cook was in the midst of an extra baking.

“Boss here?” again queried Nippers excitedly.

“To hell with you and the boss!” said the cook, who, between the baking and his liver, was a little out of sorts.

Away ran Nippers to the new cutting, where, to his discomfiture, he found Sandy Mac acting foreman. Mac and he did not pull.

“Ain’t the boss here?” he panted.

“It don’t look much like it, does it, sonny?”

“Where is he?” Nippers was rapidly becoming frantic.

Sandy Mac eyed him with an affected curiosity.

“The lippy young pup,” he murmured softly, “he gives himself that many airs, ye’d think he was nevvy to Van Horne.”

In despair Nippers seated himself on a boulder, and stared vacantly at the gang. He had half a mind to go to Bisco, but Carson might not be there. He caught Mac’s eye, and again addressed him.

“Won’t you tell me now?” He tried a wheedling tone.

“Tell ye what?”

“Where he is?”

“Where who is?”

“ The boss,”

“ What boss ? ”

“ Yo’re mighty smart now, ain’t yo’ ? ” The wheedling tone had vanished. The men looked at Nippers and grinned encouragement. He needed none.

“ Don’t be sassy now ! ”

“ Who’s sassy ? ”

“ Yo’re sassy.”

“ Yo don’t know sass from perliteness, yo’re that ignorant.”

“ I weren’t brought up your way, its easy seein’.”

“ Yo, we’n’t brought up at all, yo’ walked up, an’ druv a cow ahead o’ yo’.”

The men roared. Nippers rose to his feet, looked Mac in the eye, placed his thumb to his nose, extended his four fingers, then, turning, walked moodily away, followed by a remark from Mac, roughly descriptive, markedly condemnatory, and at the first bend in the road met the person for whom he was looking.

“ Oh, sir ! ” exclaimed Nippers.

“ Well ? ”

Nippers glanced warily about to make sure that no one was within earshot ; then, with an air of tragic mystery, in a stage whisper that could have been heard at least a hundred feet farther than his ordinary tone, he said :

“ He’s back ! ”

Carson looked puzzled.

“ Who ? ” he inquired.

“ The priest,—Father McCool ! ”

"Whe-e-e-u-u!" whistled Carson.

"An' there's another with him," continued Nippers.

"Another?"

"Ay; young cuss, bossed his nibs all around." Then Nippers gave him a detailed account of the morning.

"Nippers," said Carson, "not a word of this to another soul."

Nippers pulled his cap down over his left eye, glared importance from beneath the brim, and replied:

"Not a word, s'elp me!"

"Now," said Carson, "I'm going to interview his holiness; you'd better get back to camp."

"Goin' alone?"

Carson nodded.

Nippers looked hurt, and began to fidget.

"Can't I go too, boss?"

Carson shook his head.

"They might turn ugly?"

Carson smiled. "I don't think so," he said.

"Two to one's big odds when it comes to scrappin'?" whined Nippers.

"Will you tackle the father?" inquired Carson.

Nippers' eyes glowed. "I'd tackle the devil if you was there to back me, boss."

Carson laughed. "No, you'd better get back to camp," he said.

"Oh, boss."

"Get along with you now."

Away slouched Nippers with hanging head.

As the evening was coming on and the shadows were beginning to lengthen, Carson stood behind the clump of bushes which had screened Nippers. A small tent was pitched some twenty yards away, before which smouldered the remains of a camp fire. In front of the fire, stretched on a gray blanket, reclined the burly form of Father McCool. He was smoking a clay pipe, and talking to a young man, who sat with his back to Carson, a cigarette between his lips, in moody silence.

"Only two more days of it," the priest was saying, "then Higgins takes it off my hands, and I'm clear."

Carson heard the words and smiled.

"I'll not feel safe till you're out of this," murmured the other; "he's a hard one to fool."

A startled look came into Carson's face. There was something wonderfully familiar in that voice,—but whose could it be? Where had he heard it before? He had always flattered himself that he possessed an unfailing memory,—that he could as readily recognize a man by his voice as by his face. Here was a person whom he had most certainly known,—but where, when? That was the question,—and a question that perplexed him not a little. Whoever he was, however, the perplexing young man was right: he would very shortly prove himself most conclusively "a hard one to fool," and at the thought he smiled grimly.

"Pshaw," continued the priest, "he doesn't know the first thing about it; thinks I'm miles from

here. He may be sharp as you say, but"—a self-satisfied smile spread itself over his smug countenance—"I flatter myself I'm about equally sharp."

Carson stepped out from behind the bushes, and walked up to the fireplace, his hands in his coat pockets.

"No, Jim Andrews," he said, in the quietest voice imaginable, "not half so sharp."

The effect was electrical. The young man gave a very unmanly scream, hid his face in his hands, and began rocking his body backwards and forwards.

His reverence, the person addressed as Jim Andrews, behaved differently. With an expression by no means orthodox, he sprang to his feet, and stood glaring at Carson, who coolly seated himself on a log, and laughed. It was not altogether a pleasant laugh though,—not contagious.

"So I've got you at last, ha—ha—ha ! From Michipicoten to Bisco is a long way through the bush, but not quite far enough—no, not quite far enough, ha—ha—ha !"

The object of his laughter looked unutterable things.

"You certainly are a great fool, Jim Andrews," Carson went on in the same maddening tones. "I cannot imagine a man at your trade caught like this"—he made an expressive gesture with his hands—"without a weapon, and"—with a backward jerk of his thumb—"such a pal."

Carson paused a moment. Andrews, as he may now be called, ground his teeth.

"Well, what's the next move?" he inquired.

"To bring you back to Bisco."

"Supposing I object?"

He stretched himself again on his blanket with an affected air of unconcern. Carson shrugged his shoulders.

"I wouldn't if I were you."

Andrews refilled his pipe, and lighted it with a coal.

"Two thousand's a good morning's haul," he sneered.

"Not at all bad," was the amiable response.

"Now tell me what you've got in those bales."

"Can't you guess?"

"I think I can."

A cunning look came into Andrews' face ; he became communicative.

"Besides the ordinary thing, in that one,"—indicating the bale that resembled a tent,—"I've about one hundred dollars' worth of the highest grade Swiss gold watches, manufactured in New York city, of the best American brass—the rankest metal known—guaranteed to run long enough to let me get well out of the country. I'd have made about two hundred per cent on that little deal, if you hadn't spoilt it, damn you!"

Carson smiled.

"I think," he said, "the men owe me a debt of gratitude."

"I hope they may pay it," said the other, with a sneer.

The young man meanwhile sat quietly where he

was, his face hidden in his hands. He was watching Carson through the interstices of his fingers.

Andrews spoke again.

“How did you know I was in Bisco?”

“I didn’t know you were in Bisco.”

“Didn’t you follow me?”

“From Michipicoten?—no.”

“Well, I’ll be hanged!”

“Very possibly,” Carson assented, cheerfully.

“Did you know me when I gave you that tract in the shanty?”

“Not at first; there was something familiar, though, in your figure; your voice, I could hardly make out; then I discovered your little game. Your disguise was good, very good, indeed. It was later, during the night or morning, it suddenly struck me like a revelation; then I knew it was you.”

“And then you went down to the shanty—followed me?”

Carson nodded.

“I got ahead of you that time.”

“Yes, you got ahead of me that time.”

There was a few moments’ silence. Andrews picked a leaf from the ground, and began pulling it to pieces. Carson turned his glance again towards the young man, who bent his head still lower. Why did his figure remind him so forcibly of some one?—and who could that some one be? He had never been so strangely at fault in his life before. He stared at the ground, frowned, gnawed his moustache in puzzled wonderment, and glanced again at the figure. A look

of startled recognition came into his eyes ; for the first time he noted two things, namely, that the hands of this extremely nervous individual were unusually small and delicately shaped for a man ; and that upon the third finger of the left hand was a plain diamond ring. He knew that ring—in fact, it had once been his own. With a smothered exclamation he rose to his feet, so likewise did the youth, at the same time uncovering his face. For an instant they stood facing each other.

“KATE !”

He was beside her, stern, terrible. He gripped the slender wrist, so that the pain of it hurt her. Her face grew colorless.

“Edward—Edward—have pity ! Oh, my God !” she moaned.

He looked her over from head to foot.

“What does this mean—this masquerading ?” His voice was strangely calm. Its calmness terrified her all the more.

Jim Andrews raised himself on his arm and watched the two.

In an agony she looked down,—*down at her legs !* and the hot blood rushed back from her heart and dyed her white face crimson.

“What have you to do with this man. What is he to you ?”

“Don’t—don’t ask me.”

“Kate, I insist upon knowing.” His voice was calm as ever. His eyes,—a curious light had come into his eyes,—grew hard, bright, pitiless.

"He is my—my father." Her tone was scarce above a whisper.

"Your father!" He dropped her wrist—dropped it as though the touch contaminated him, and stepped back a pace. "Your father, the man who killed my friend? the most notorious—"

Then she came to herself of a sudden—she became the lioness! She forgot her terror—*her legs*—everything except that her father was in danger,—that she must defend him. She became magnificent. Past her lover she walked like a goddess,—a goddess in trousers! was there ever such a being? He had never admired her half so much before.

Jim Andrews actually forgot his own situation, and became interested.

"And what would you do with him,—my father?" she exclaimed. Her voice was no longer scarcely audible, but rang out clear as a bell. "You will bring him to Bisco, you say. We know what that means: you will hound him to death,—my father? Shame—shame!—have you no feeling for me, for the woman you swore you loved, whom you swore you would protect: is it protection to hold her name up for a bye-word among her fellows? A pretty protection that! God save me from such a protection. Or is that your way of proving your love? Will you show me that those were only empty words,—hateful, cowardly words? Do you think his daughter will ever look at you again, except to curse you,"—she stamped her foot,—“should you do what you threaten? Put yourself in his place. You have

strong feelings—passionate feelings—how would you have acted were your positions reversed? What he did, he did in a moment of passion;—what you might do, were you equally provoked:—for that mad act must he die the most hateful of deaths? I tell you he shall not,—do you hear?—he shall not! he is my father,—*my* father, I tell you——”

“ He killed *my* friend,” said Carson doggedly.

“ Your friend,—pah! am I not more than your friend? Will you sacrifice the woman you love for your friend? Oh, you are mad—mad.”

“ Justice demands it.”

“ Justice!” She raised her hands; there was a blazing scorn in her eyes. “ Justice, dear God! he cries for justice—bloody justice! Hear him! Will justice be any the better off for his death? Will justice be any the more just for my sorrow? Will justice be any the more just when it has taught me to hate you? Leave justice to those whose trade is justice. Why could you not have listened to me? I implored you to leave this matter alone; I begged you on my knees. I thought you were good, I thought you were kind, I thought you were brave. Goodness teaches us to forgive,—have you forgiven? Kindness teaches us to forbear,—is this forbearance? Is it brave to play the sneak and the spy? Edward Carson! I thought you were noble,—I would not have loved you else; will you teach me to despise him whom I loved?—I am but a weak woman.” Her voice grew tender, a big tear rolled down each cheek; she was very clever,—she looked an angel. “ Will

you break my poor woman's heart?" She placed her hand upon her side with a gesture full of pathos.

Carson seated himself upon the log from which he had risen, and bowed his head upon his hand.

"Edward, I am only a woman."

He made no response.

"Edward, my own, you love me; let justice alone, Edward."

He remained silent.

"We must not wreck our lives, dear, for a sentiment." She knelt beside him, she drew his hands from his face, and kissed him on the lips—she was very lovely. Perhaps for a special constable he was weak?—as her arguments were weak. He put his arms about her, and kissed her sweet face again and again. Then she jumped to her feet and ran to her father.

"Go," she panted in her excitement, "there's a paddle,"—she thrust one into his hand—"a canoe, tent, blankets—go!"

She hurried him to the shore.

"Those Swiss watches manufactured in New York City," he murmured.

"S-h-h-s-s-s!" she said, and pushed out the canoe.

"And you?" he said, turning to her.

"I—I remain with him, with my—my husband," she replied, blushing like a summer morning.

Then she held her face up to him; her eyes were filled with tears. "Kiss me good-bye, father."

He stooped, and did so.

A few moments later the canoe turned the point and was gone.

The loads were all tamped, ready for firing. The horses had been driven out of danger ; all hands had retired six or eight chains.

Sandy Mac sprang into the cutting, touched the projecting fuses with a red-hot iron, and out again like a cat.

Cisco Jimmy borrowed a chew from Black George, filled his cheek, sighed, and remarked :

“Them darned whisky pedlars are pretty hard to down.”

“Ay,” responded Black George, “an’ that thar Father McCool beats the hull outfit for right-down cuteness. Think o’ him rigged up like a priest ! —cripes !”

“An’ think o’ all them cans ripped to blazes an’ not a drop left ; that’s what I calls crime.”

“What clean knocks me gally-west is what’s become o’ the boss. Carson never even turned up for his pay, an’ that young Nippers gone too. Humph !”

“I heerd tell,” continued Cisco Jimmy, expectorating thoughtfully at a chip, “as how he went off with some woman or other, but then——”

BANG ! BANG ! BANG ! BANG !

Then a rattle of falling débris.

“A-a-a-all over !”

The gang returned to the cutting. The clink, clink, clink of the hammers on the drills rang out in the

clear air. The work went on, much as it had when Carson had bossed the gang, and Nippers had carried the drills. Both had gone, as so many went on that wonderful line—no one knew whither,—and very probably no one cared.

A TRUE CHRONICLE OF THE OPIONGO.

CHAPTER I.

JOHN KNOWLES was by no means a brilliant man. As a boy at school he had been a butt for his companion's chaff. In later years the men who knew him spoke of him as a good sort, but slow. The women said that he was stupid and a fright,—possibly they were correct. He was certainly not beautiful : he had red hair, small blue eyes, a freckled face, and a nose,—merciful heaven, what a nose ! It was neither long nor short, fat nor thin, Roman nor Grecian ; it was, in fact, a feature that beggared description. Despite its ugliness, however, his face was a kindly one, with a certain straightforward manliness about it. His size, too, was against him ; at least, so the women thought. "Look at his ridiculous shoulders," they would exclaim. "We don't want a Hercules. Imagine being touched by such a monster." Up would go their eyes to heaven. "I assure you, my love, I would much prefer a bear—horrors !" and so forth, and so on ;—they discussed

him mostly as the dear creatures will anything that wears trousers. Then too he was shy, self-conscious, awkward,—and what under the sun does society want with the like of that?

To counterbalance these little deficiencies he possessed some qualifications by no means too common.—If he was stupid he had indomitable perseverance, he was high-principled, he was conscientious, and with these three attributes it is a little difficult to say just exactly what a man will make of his life.

John Knowles was, however, singularly unfortunate : he had fallen in love, as men cursed with high principles and conscientiousness generally do, deeply and hopelessly. To fall honorably in love, with any one but yourself, is a piece of insane folly, as everybody knows ; but ! alas : John Knowles was much too stupid to see it in that light. He gloried in the depravity of his condition.

The object of his affections was a very pretty, very clever little brunette, with a score of other admirers, and an insatiable love of admiration.

Knowles had several friends among the men, and they were all sincerely sorry for him ; but they thought it wisest not to say so, at least to Knowles,—he was far too big.

The women themselves were puzzled, not at his falling in love with her, he was only following in the footsteps of a dozen others, but at her accepting his admiration as she did. They couldn't make it out, so they consoled themselves with making nasty

remarks :—but then women have a habit of making nasty remarks—particularly about each other,—so it didn't really matter. Miss Ethel March, however, had her reasons for allowing her great bear to come and dance to her ;—she found him useful.

He kept her supplied with flowers during the winter, he ran messages for her, he listened to her endless stories of past conquest, and was edified by them ; he quite overlooked the utter absence of principle then evinced. He mistook the spiteful things she said of her dearest friend for wit, and was hugely tickled. His admiration was so sincere that it amused her. “He is so funny, he makes me roar,” so she said. He meanwhile failed to notice the fact of her being a vain woman, and actually believed her to be an angel. Men are such fools,—especially the conscientious ones.

One evening when he called, she was more enchanting than ever. He looked into her wonderful dark eyes. He thought he saw there love, and trust, and sweet womanly sympathy, and faith, and a hundred other tender graces. There was love enough in them, heaven knows—love of ease, love of money, love of self, but of the kind he looked for there was none, not the most infinitesimal amount. And if there was any honesty in them, it was only the reflection of his own. Surely, he thought, she must care for him. She allowed him to visit her, to sit whole hours with her,—O delicious hours ! When he expressed his admiration in his clumsy way, she seemed pleased. At the dances to which he followed her,—he loathed

dances,—she always gave him more of her sweet society than she gave to any other man. Surely this was sufficient proof of a tenderer feeling than one of mere toleration.

Thus he reasoned to himself. He had much to learn about the sex,—much that most men know instinctively. But then he was stupid—oh, so stupid.

While she,—he felt that she was clever enough to see that he loved her,—loved! do I say? He worshiped!—he adored her!

And for a few moments, as he looked on the sweet face before him, he forgot his shyness, his awkwardness, the self-consciousness that had maddened him a score of times, and leaning forward he took one of her pretty hands in his and told her of his love; and her answer—may Heaven forgive her!—*she laughed in his face!*

The idea was quite too ridiculous. Of course he might come and see her,—two or three times a week,—why not? She might even continue to honour him by the acceptance of as many flowers and presents as he might see fit to send her. Then the great gentle creature became as dogged as he could be—with her. He must have her to himself, her always—or nothing. He was welcome then to nothing. Nothing in exchange for all his faithful, honest affection, the best his heart could offer,—nothing but a laugh! Certainly it seemed a little hard,—but then he had brought it all upon himself by his stupid earnestness. Why could he not be like other men?—

why not indeed? Why cannot a lion be like an ass, or an eagle like a crow? But then, with all her cleverness, she did not know her lover to be a lion. She had convinced herself, months before, that he was nothing more or less than a big, harmless donkey. Yes, and one that did not even know how to bray. Had he stormed and bullied, he might have been successful, and been made miserable for life. Some women must be wooed in that manner to be won, but it is an open question whether such are worth the winning. However, he did not know this, and perhaps it is as well that he did not. It was much better for him to go down to his grave believing all the good he could of her. A great disappointment is a bitter pill to swallow, but it is gall and wormwood to discover that she to whom we have given the best that is in us is not, and never was, worthy a thought: that at least was spared him. He was much too stupid to see it.

He sat before her, stricken, dazed, a world of anguish in his eyes. Then he bowed his head, and covering his face with his large hands, sat motionless and silent in his misery. He did not, as lovers do, entreat her for a second hearing; instinctively he knew the hopelessness of such a course. The die was cast—he had staked his all upon a throw and lost. How he left her he never quite knew. The great trouble with natures such as his is, that they have a terrible capacity to feel—to suffer.

It was a little before ten in the evening when he left Ethel March.

It was a little after two in the morning when he reached his boarding-house.

What he did with himself in the interim, or where he went, he could never tell.

His own unhappiness, however, did not make him a whit less thoughtful of the comfort of others. He took his boots off at the foot of the two flights of stairs which led up into his own room, lest he should disturb the other boarders, who were all a hard-working, early-retiring lot of humanity.

As usual he knelt down to pray, but knew not what he said ; then he put out the light and got into his bed, but he did not sleep ; he lay there tossing from side to side, suffering as he had never done before. When at length he did fall asleep, it was only to dream of a happiness that could never be his. The next morning at breakfast the other boarders noticed his altered appearance. One politely hoped that he was not ill ; he thanked him quietly and assured him that he was not. At the office—he was clerk in a large wholesale dry goods establishment—his chief exclaimed in shocked tones :

“Good heavens, Knowles ! What on earth’s the matter with you ? Are you ill ?”

Knowles flushed.

“No, sir,” he replied. “I am perfectly well, thank you.”

“You had better see a doctor,” said his chief, and hustled away.

Knowles did not take his advice ; but turned to his work for solace, set his teeth, and played the man.

A month passed away. He had lost ten pounds in weight : his misery was not allayed.

Two months ; he still worked like a demon, and longed without hope for change.

One day, towards the end of the third month, he was reading his paper, while he munched his noon-day sandwich, when his eye was arrested by an advertisement ; it was to the effect that some wild lands in the township of R——, in Northern Ontario, were for sale.

A thought occurred to him ; he dismissed it, and returned to his work.

In the evening it attacked him again, and would not be driven away. In the end it conquered him.

A week later he resigned his position in, say, Snob and Sons'. Snob was irritated, Sons were puzzled. Knowles was without exception the best clerk they had.

" May I ask what you intend doing ? " says Snob.

" Settling, " says Knowles.

" Settling ! — ah ! — ahem ! — indeed ! — settling whom ? or—ah ! what ? " says Snob, somewhat mystified.

" I am going to buy and clear a farm in Northern Canada ; the life here does not agree with me, sir."

" I am sorry to hear it, Mr. Knowles, " said Snob pompously.—Why, on Earth is it that successful tradesmen are always pompous ?—" You are one of our most promising clerks—the most promising I might say ; you are certain of promotion ere long. Do you think you are acting wisely ? " Knowles

thought so, said so, and finally bade Snob and Sons good-bye, and took his departure, leaving those gentlemen very much astonished that anybody having the chance to become gray-haired in their employ should throw such an opportunity away.

John Knowles was in his thirtieth year when he left the above-mentioned firm. He had entered it fourteen years previously at a salary of twenty dollars a month. When he left he was in the enjoyment of sixteen hundred dollars per annum, and being of a careful, saving disposition, had accumulated about \$3,500.

From a crown-land agent in charge of the district he got what information he wanted with regard to necessary payments, etc., and a week later took his berth in a sleeper, and was soon rushing as rapidly as steam could convey him to the scene of his new life and labors.

At four o'clock on a certain August morning he arrived at a melancholy little village, consisting of half a dozen frame houses, as many log ones, and an apology for a hotel, where he was informed a stage would start in a few minutes for Eganville, where a second would connect with it for Boudeuel, and a third take him thence to Bark Lake, upon the shores of which he intended settling. His trip by stage it is needless to dwell upon; suffice it to say that in due course of time he reached his destination, where he found, in the phraseology of the country, a "stopping place," and a most squalid dirty one it was. As for the country, it was about the most

dreary, desolate jumble of rocky hills and gloomy spruce swamps that one could well imagine, with an old government road, by name the Opiongo, running snake-like through it. The first morning after his arrival John Knowles shouldered an axe, with the laudable intention of doing a little exploration for land, and returning for supper. He followed the Opiongo a mile or so, then struck off across country, and, as might be expected, spent the day, the night, and half the following day, among the hills. In short, he lost his way, and in all likelihood would have left his bones to bleach in some spruce swamp if by sheer good luck he had not been found by one Dick Swartz, a big, red-shirted, red-bearded settler in search of a young heifer, which, like our hero, had gone astray, but, unlike him, was never found. Swartz was a good bushman, a good hunter, and a good fellow; and before Knowles had been with him an hour he had taken a decided liking to him. Swartz informed him that the Opiongo was one mile north, the "stopping place," Jenkins', about two miles northeast, and was considerably astonished when Knowles told him that he had no compass, and had never been in the wilderness before.

Swartz stared at him a little puzzled.

"You see," said Knowles, "I've come out here to settle."

"Humph!" said Swartz.

"And I thought I'd have a look about for land. I'm staying at Jenkins' at present."

"Farmed before, I s'pose?" inquired Swartz.

Knowles was constrained to admit that he had not.

“Judge o’ land?”

Knowles blushed and felt uncomfortable. His gigantic ignorance dawned upon him.

“No, I—I’m afraid I’m not.”

“Humph!” ejaculated Swartz a second time. He did not speak again till they reached the Opiongo.

“Jenkins’ is on that hill,” he said, pointing eastward.

“I’m much obliged, I’m sure,” said Knowles. “Goodness knows when I would have found this road if it hadn’t been for you.”

“It’s considered unusual in these parts,” said Swartz, speaking slowly and gravely, “to travel the bush alone unless you have a sort o’ general notion where you’re heading for, an’ know somethin’ about the lay o’ country.”

“I suppose so,” said Knowles, “but you see I’m a little green at this work yet.”

“Yes,” replied Swartz, eyeing him curiously; “folks don’t always come out o’ their first trip as lucky as you did.”

Knowles smiled. “I’d have reached a house, I suppose, in course of time?”

“If you’d walked seventy or eighty miles, speakin’ rough, in the direction you were goin’, you might ’a struck Bill Simpson’s clearin’, but then agin you mightn’t.”

“Seventy or eighty miles!” Knowles was astonished.

Swartz nodded. "That's, as the crow flies, about the distance, I guess."

Knowles glanced above at the great, bare, lonely hills, and began partly to realize his escape.

After a few more words they separated, and fifteen minutes or so later Knowles reached Jenkins', tired, hungry, and footsore.

Three days after the meeting above described, Swartz called at Jenkins' with a letter to be sent away by the first stage.

Knowles was sitting on the doorstep discussing an after-dinner pipe.

"Well," said Swartz, after they had wished each other good-day, "have you located your claim yet?"

"If you mean my farm," said Knowles, with a somewhat rueful smile, "I have not."

Swartz seated himself, likewise, on the steps, pulled a short and remarkably black clay-pipe from his pocket, filled it slowly, carefully lighted it, and puffed for a few moments in thoughtful silence, then remarked in his deliberate way, as though he weighed every word carefully before giving it utterance, "There's as purty and likely a bit o' side-hill as you'd see in a week o' Sundays adjoinin' my clearin', sile a good sticky clay loam, that'd last years with a little proper lookin' after, but the clearin's about as nasty as can be; heavy yellow birch mostly, and a sight o' brush an' tops."

"Oh!" exclaimed Knowles, brightening visibly, "I'd like to see it, What's the odds about the clear-

ing? I can hire a man or two to help me for a couple of months, and in that time——”

“They’d clear and get ready for, say, a potatoe crop about five acres at the most,” said Swartz, with a smile, “an’ they’d have to hustle to do it.”

The long and short of it was that Knowles, who could hardly tell one soil from another, and had the vaguest and most hazy idea of handling an axe, saw the land, and on Swartz’s recommendation bought it, and persuaded Swartz to help him to clear it and build his log house.

Swartz turned out a treasure, and under his direction Knowles, who possessed a tremendous capacity for work, especially for that kind requiring strong limbs and good lungs, and almost a genius for mechanical effort, soon swung as capable an axe as his instructor.

By the end of the first month and a half, there were three acres cleared and burnt, a log house twenty by fifteen feet erected, and a smart team of horses standing in a makeshift of a stable.

Swartz was delighted with his new neighbor, who likewise was delighted with Swartz. Judging from his changed appearance, the new life suited him. His cheeks, so short a time before pale and hollow with office work and unhappiness, were bronzed by sun and wind; a red stubble beard decorated his chin; the muscles on his great lean arms stood out like knotted rope; his chest development was magnificent; his blue eyes sparkled; he ate like two men, and worked like a Hercules.

CHAPTER II.

ON or about the fifteenth day of October Knowles walked over to Jenkins', distant two miles or so, to inquire for a parcel he was expecting by stage. The parcel had not arrived ; instead of it, however, liquor had and news. Jenkins was as drunk as the proverbial lord and as jolly as a sand-boy.

When drunk Jenkins was talkative. He button-holed Knowles ; he told him funny stories, omitting the point, and laughed uproariously ; he regaled him with anecdotes, verging on racy, of one Bridget Scully ; he offered to back a certain ring-boned, knock-kneed, spavined, broken-winded quadruped,—a horse by courtesy—against any son of a gun's horse on the Opiongo ; he then executed a wavering and uncertain clog dance, winding up with a startling “whoop !” and the assurance that they were “all boys together,” and lived “on the same side of the fence.” Finally, he seated himself on a chair, slipped from it to the floor, where he fell into a sound, and doubtless refreshing, slumber. In an outer room Knowles discovered young Jenkins, aged sixteen years and three months, in an equally maudlin state. In disgust he turned to go, and at the door was confronted by the hired man, with a mournful expression

of countenance, his eyes filled with tears, who informed him in choked accents that he was a "jolly good fellow, and didn't give a toss for no man." In the front of the house he met Mrs. Jenkins with some washing on her arm ; she looked harassed and miserable, Knowles thought with ample reason.

"Good-day, Mr. Knowles," she said, "an' have ye heerd the noos ?"

"None in particular, Mrs. Jenkins," he replied.

Mrs. Jenkins sighed, and mopped the perspiration from her forehead with her apron.

"Why, a gang come down from Lochran's on the Madawaska, sayin' that they left on account of the diphtery, which has broke out at one o' the shanties."

"Indeed ?"

"Ay, three men sickenin' with it now, an' a fourth died yesterday. Them hogs in the house," jerking her thumb in the direction, "are fillin' themselves up with liquor. Cuz the doctor told my man yesterday at Killaloe, that to drink a little whiskey was a good thing to keep away the disease, he didn't tell him to make a downright beast of himself."

The news did not trouble Knowles much at the time. He consoled himself with the reflection that in all likelihood, if there was any truth in the report, it was doubtless very much exaggerated, and bidding Mrs. Jenkins good-day, started on his return. Arrived at his clearing, he told Swartz, who looked grave on hearing it, and informed him that, eight or ten years before, an epidemic of diphtheria had broken out in

the district, before which the settlers had been swept away like flies.

There was little more said on the subject. The house was new and clean, and they, particularly Knowles, felt that the danger, if any, would be very slight, even should the disease appear, owing to the isolated position of the different farm-houses, the district being so very sparsely settled. Their nearest neighbor to the east was Jenkins, and a mile further on in the same direction, were the Conways, at the foot of Front Lake; while to the west lived the Dupuis, distant three-quarters of a mile; next to them the Donaldsons; opposite the Donaldsons, in a tumble-down shanty, an old bachelor, by name Tony Bartlett,—known through the district as old Tony; still farther, a lumbering depot, a mile or so beyond old Tony's, on the shore of Bark Lake.

A week passed, and there was no further news of the diphtheria. Knowles forgot all about it, as he had many other things with which to occupy his mind. Swartz began to hope that it was a false alarm.

Three days more passed. Knowles hired an extra hand to help at the clearing. He picked him up at the “stopping-place” on Jenkins’ recommendation.

The morning after his arrival, while he and Swartz were felling a hemlock, the new hand stopped in his work a moment, a spasm as of pain shot across his face—he put his hand to his head.

“What’s up?” inquired Swartz, driving his axe into the butt.

“I waked this mornin’ with the terriblest head-

ache an' pains in my back, an' my throat's that sore."

Swartz pulled his axe out, and felt the edge with his thumb.

"Where did ye come from?" he asked.

"One o' Lochran's camps on the Madawaska," was the reply.

Swartz retired, twenty feet or so, to a log, seated himself on it, filled and lighted his pipe.

"I heerd tell," he said slowly, "as how there was considerable sickness in one o' them camps."

The new hand seated himself on an opposite log.

"There is considerable, that's why I left," he replied. "I only stayed a week, when one o' the mule-punchers died, then four more took ill—quinsy they said it was. Leastways, the doctor Lochran sent up said it were."

"Quinsy, eh?"

The new hand rose slowly to his feet.

"Boss," he said, "I'm too darned sick—I guess I'll quit."

"Perhaps it's as well," said Swartz. "Where do ye live?"

"About three mile this side o' Killaloe."

Five minutes afterwards he slouched across the clearing, with his dunnage on his back, and disappeared round the first bend in the road. Then Swartz went into the house. On one of the window-sills was a can containing a dry lump of rosin, the remains of some which he had used, mixed with

grease, to patch a canoe. Taking a handful out he sprinkled it on the stove, then he stirred up the fire and opened the damper. Soon the whole house was filled with thick smoke and a strong aroma of burning rosin. Swartz rushed out of doors coughing and rubbing his eyes, tripped over a log, and almost tumbled into Knowles' arms.

“Hullo, Dick, what's the matter now ?”

“Matter ! Why, the new hand's took the hay-road.”

“Indeed ?”

Swartz nodded. “Aye—sick.”

“Sick,—what's wrong with him ?”

“Head aching—pains in his back—an' if I ain't far wrong it's the diphtery ; them's the symptoms.”

Knowles whistled.

“It may be the quinsy, of course,” said Swartz, “but I don't care about takin' no chances,—I've been fumigating with rosin.”

“Fumigating—rosin ?”

“The doctor advised it,—or sulphur, when the diphtery was here before.”

This little incident left them by no means as comfortable as it had found them ; it seemed, too, to be a forerunner of bad weather. The sun went down in a great bank of clouds ; a raw east wind sprang up, bringing with it a fine drizzle. The next morning the rain was falling in torrents, and continued all that day and the following one. On the third, which was a Wednesday, Swartz started off for Jenkins', to try and borrow a cross-cut saw. About noon he

returned with the saw—and information far from pleasant.

“The new hand stayed at Jenkins’ over night,” he informed Knowles, “and drove to Killaloe by stage next day. You mind that young Joe Dupuis that’s workin’ for Jenkins, doin’ odd chores about?”

Knowles nodded.

“He’s sickenin’ with it.”

“Diphtheria?”

“That’s about the size o’ it; an’ all hands drunk.”

“You don’t say so!”

“I do,—worse luck,—an’ there’s no doubt about it this time,—the doctor’s bin up an’ seen him, an’ says it’s the diphtery he’s got,—however he come by it.”

On Saturday morning, old Tony called in passing. Knowles and Swartz were busily employed, in front of the house, making scoops for a shed-roof.

“Good-day,” said old Tony. He looked melancholy but important.

The two men addressed paused in their work and nodded.

“Well, Tony,” said Swartz, “an’ what’s the best word with you?”

“The best word ain’t much to brag on, Dick.” Tony’s whole voice and manner smacked somewhat of the sepulchre.

“That’s bad.”

“Joe Dupuis went home sick last night.”

His hearers looked interested.

“And died this morning at five o’clock. At seven his brother an’ one o’ the women buried him in the

field back o' the house. Doctor said to bury him at once."

His hearers were horrified.

"Yes," continued the old man, shaking his head, "a rugged chunk o' a lad like him to go that sudden,—it's a terror."

"Had they a good doctor?" inquired Knowles.

"Aye, good enough when sober, but he's easy led, more's the pity,—an' now he says one o' the others got it,—a little girl. It's an old stuffy kind o' place, an' now the sickness is in it, it'll take God A'mighty Himself to clear it."

Then old Tony bid them good-day and left them to digest the bad news as best they might. Two days later the little girl died, and Mrs. Dupuis and her other two daughters got it. Then more bad weather set in, and for a week Knowles could do little but sit in the house and smoke—and think. That played the mischief with him. As long as he had plenty of hard, tiring work to do, he was, comparatively speaking, happy ; when that was denied him he thought of Ethel March,—and was not comforted. He discovered that the life which he had selected to live, like most others, had its drawbacks. Monotony was its worst feature. In desperation he made a checkerboard, and he and Swartz played draughts till he loathed the very thought of the game. Of course he could talk—with Swartz. And he did, of diphtheria and the weather, and, apart from these exhilarating subjects, there was but little else—with the exception of farming.

The mist and rain wrapped the hills, the lake was hidden by the vapour ; some few black, withered leaves still clung to the sad poplars, and rustled distressingly. The road became a slough. It was not gay. Conversation flagged,—grew balky,—stopped altogether. Swartz, chin on hands, elbows on knees, smoked like some sooty chimney. Then the real hideousness of the life,—the loneliness,—the desolation,—sprang up like a phantom, and mocked at him.

Once or twice Knowles put his overcoat on, and walked for miles, but his thoughts, bitter and sweet alike, kept pace with him. The week dragged its weary length to a close ; he wakened one morning, the sun was shining ! He sprang from his bed, and actually whistled as he fed the live-stock. Breakfast over, he rushed to his work.

That morning he positively forgot everything,—diphtheria, love-madness, all, except that the sun shone, that he lived, that he was a man with a man's life to live, and a man's work to do.

Shortly after midday, Swartz, who had passed the night at his own farm, returned with gloomy looks. Mrs. Dupuis had died on Tuesday last, after a five days' illness ; the two children had died the day before, a boy was the only one left in the family, and he had fled in terror, no one knew whither. Mrs. Donaldson had it ; three men at the depot were ill ; out of a family of nine seven had died at a place called Rockingham on the Madawaska. Killaloe had three cases.

In the district there were two doctors : one generally drunk, though competent enough when sober ; the other, according to report, incompetent, sober or otherwise. The competent inebriate lived twenty miles away ; the incompetent abstainer, twenty-six. The roads were little better than impassable :—the settlers' predicament may be imagined.

Knowles flung down his axe, and became—for the first time in his life—fluent, nay, almost eloquent.

“ Cannot the government do something ? Can’t they send proper medical aid ? Are we all to die like dogs ? etc., etc., etc.”

Swartz smoked in moody silence. He was well aware that the government would do something—like all other governments—when it was too late ; when half the settlers were dead, they would doubtless take measures to stamp out the disease—and save the other half.

Swartz knew this perfectly,—most men who live under any form of government know it.

Knowles was for organizing relief parties, and actually wrote the government a letter, replete with feeling, which doubtless found its way into a Departmental waste-paper basket. Swartz approved the letter, and conclusively showed the folly and danger of other than proper medical aid.

On the sixth of November Mrs. Donaldson died, and there was a report that the Conways had it. Knowles and Swartz did not talk as much of the scourge as they had done, and referred to it as “ it ” when they did. In the mornings Knowles went through the

process of swallowing, on first awakening, to discover the state of his throat ; very likely, Swartz did the same. It is within the bounds of probability that every human being in the settlement, old enough to appreciate the danger of the situation, did likewise.

It was about this time that Ethel March did some more of her she-devil's work. From a common friend she learned Knowles' address, and wrote him just such a letter as she knew would touch him, telling him of another admirer she had : how that she found him tiring, that she would be pleased to see her great bear again, and why had he gone without a word?—with much else in the same vein. Why she wrote it, heaven and one woman alone know. She had no earthly intention of marrying him, and fortunately, or otherwise (the reader may judge), Knowles knew it. Still it brought the past before him with a cruel vividness—that wonderful past, with all its sweetness, all its bitterness. He had called at Jenkins' that morning, and he read and re-read her letter as he returned to his clearing.

When within a hundred yards of it he met Swartz trudging along with his dunnage on his back, a rifle, which Knowles remembered to have seen him place in the corner of his room, under his arm, and upon his face an expression of portentous gravity. The two men came suddenly upon each other at a turn in the road.

Swartz stopped short at a distance of about twenty yards, dropped his dunnage bag, and held up his hand.

“Stop !” he cried in a sharp, loud voice.

Knowles did so in much bewilderment, and stared at him.

“ You’ll have to get another hand, Mr. Knowles, I’ve quit,” he said.

“ What in heaven’s name’s the matter, man ? ”

A miserable look came into Swartz’s face.

“ I’ve got ‘IT,’ ” he replied, with a weak attempt at a smile, “ an’ there ain’t no sense in your gettin’ it,—leastways that I can see.”

Knowles was terribly shocked, but he hid his feelings wonderfully well.

“ Where are you going, Dick ? ” he asked gravely.

“ Home,” was the reply.

“ And who’s going to look after you ? ”

Swartz shrugged his shoulders, and stooped to pick up his dunnage bag ; Knowles took a step forward.

“ Dick,” he said, “ I didn’t believe that of you.”

It was Swartz’s turn to be surprised.

“ What have I done ? Ain’t I tryin’ to do the best I can ? —an’ God knows it ain’t any too easy. What don’t you believe ? ”

“ That you’d ever think so poorly of me as to imagine, for an instant, that I’d not look after you if you got ‘IT’ ; just as you would after me——”

“ I wouldn’t,” interrupted Swartz.

Knowles continued without paying any heed to the words :

“ Just as you would after me if I were the unlucky one. You see I’m more generous than you are.” He stepped forward, as he finished speaking.

Swartz became excited. As Knowles approached, he retreated.

“Stop, Mr. Knowles,—stop, man dear, don’t be a fool,—stop, I tell you.”

Knowles steadily advanced. Of a sudden Swartz changed his tactics; he stood still, up went his rifle! Knowles looked firmly down the glittering tube.

Swartz’s face grew livid.

“Stop, or, by God! I’ll put a bullet through you.”

“No—no, Dick: you’ll not shoot your best friend,” Knowles replied, and walked directly up to him.

Slowly the rifle was lowered till the butt rested on the ground, and Swartz, with a dogged expression on his face, leaned wearily on the muzzle.

Knowles rested his hand on his shoulder.

“Dick,” he said very gently, “there’s not one man in a thousand would have behaved with such generosity. It’s my turn now,—back to my place you go,—no sense in carrying infection anywhere else;—quick, march.”

Back accordingly they went. Arrived there and Swartz as comfortably installed in one of the rooms as possible, Knowles tacked a sheet of paper on the front door, and on it printed the single word—

“DIPHTHERIA.”

There was no need of more.

Then Knowles saddled a horse, and rode for the

competent inebriate, as though the evil one were at his heels.

Strange to say, he found him in a state of mournful sobriety,—*pro tem.*, but could not persuade him to come and see Swartz before the following day, owing to several other calls he had to make. He, however, explained to Knowles the proper treatment, provided him with the necessary medicine, gave him a fresh horse in exchange for his tired one, and, by eight o'clock that evening, the by no means pleasant solitude of the sick man was gladdened by the return of his friend.

In answer to Knowles' question as to how he felt, he said that his headache was better, but that the soreness in his throat had increased, that during the afternoon he had been troubled a good deal with coughing; and he again did his best to persuade Knowles to leave him, assuring him that he could attend to himself perfectly well without anybody's assistance; but Knowles only shook his head and smiled.

The following day, about noon, the doctor called, comparatively sober, examined the patient's throat, and pronounced it without doubt diphtheria, left directions as to treatment with Knowles, and turned to go. Knowles followed him outside the house.

“Is he very sick?” he inquired.

The doctor looked at him and nodded.

“He's a goner,” he said, “and the best thing you can do is to dig out. The country's rotten with it; any man that can leave, and does not, is a raving

fool." Then he stepped into his trap, touched his horse with the whip, and rattled away.

Knowles looked after him with an expression of scorn on his honest face.

All that evening and the next day Swartz seemed so much better, that, despite what the doctor had said, Knowles began to hope for him.

At about four o'clock the second morning he was awakened from a sound sleep by some noise. He sat up in bed, and listened. The sound was of some one choking. It came from Swartz's room, which was divided from his by a thin board partition. A minute later Knowles had lighted the lamp, and stood by the sick-bed. Swartz was resting on his elbows, his tongue protruding slightly from his mouth, and was in the last stages of strangulation. Knowles stared at him in agony, but could do nothing.

For a minute longer the choking continued, then the dying man sank heavily back, the labored breathing ceased,—another victim had fallen to the scourge.

For a few moments Knowles stood gazing in awed silence upon what had once been a friend. He recalled to mind his honesty, his faithfulness, his rough kindness.

Then the loneliness of his own position, the horror of it, assailed him as it had never done before. He was worse now than an outcast, he was a leper among his kind,—for a time at least. Thoughts more awful still came to him. Might not he, too, in a few short days, lie stark and dead, as it, that he

had once called friend, now lay? He shuddered. He had that horror of death that all young, healthy human beings ought to have. By an effort he aroused himself sufficiently to recognize the necessity of fresh air, and opened the windows; then he raked up the fire, put a handful of sulphur on the stove, and lighting a lanthorn, went out to a shed where he had some boards and tools. He had work to do, horrible work. He had to make a coffin for his friend. The sooner he was buried the better. He worked deliberately and manfully; in an hour he had a rough deal box, seven feet by two and a half made. Then he harnessed a horse to a rude jumper sleigh, and drove the box up to the door. His next task was the most terrible of all. He walked into the room, and, wrapping the body in one of the blankets, carried it out and laid it gently and reverently in the rough coffin. Then, lanthorn in hand,—for it was still dark,—he drove it to a remote corner of his clearing, where he dug poor Swartz's grave, and into it carefully lowered the coffin. Taking a prayer-book from his pocket, he removed his hat, and holding the lanthorn so as to throw light on the page, with the great dark trees about him, and a million of stars watching overhead, in a solemn hushed voice, read the service for the dead.

Then as though impelled by a higher power, he fell upon his knees and prayed,—prayed as he had never done before; for the dead man's soul, for his own, that Almighty God would lead him in safety through that dread valley of the shadow of death,

through which he, too, at that moment, might be passing.

The day was just beginning to break as he rose from his knees. He seized his spade, and in a few minutes his task was done. As he finished it the glorious sun arose and bathed the great rocky hill-tops with a golden light, and threw long purple shadows into the valleys, and changed the surface of the slumbering lake to burnished silver. While he walked back to his lonely dwelling, the weird quavering cry of a loon came from the misty distance and cheered him in his desolation with its wild living note.

CHAPTER III.

THE next week to John Knowles was neither more nor less than a hideous nightmare. Every day he worked, carted away stones, felled great trees, and toiled as he always did when troubled, like the very incarnation of unrest. There was one thing that poor Knowles was not, he was not self-sufficient, he lacked self-resources. His only known panacea for all ills was physical exhaustion and what produces it. Had he lost his right arm instead of his companion, it is not unlikely that he would also have lost his mind. As it was, with limbs intact, he slashed and hewed, and did wonders, from a physical standpoint, while he ate his heart out, and his thirsty soul cried for the sweet wine of human kindness. So Knowles laboured, and wondered if he too were going to die. He dreaded the solitude, the emptiness, of that house, which he, with his dogged obstinacy, persisted in calling, and looking upon, as home. Such a home! —his whole being rebelled against it, but he trampled upon his inner consciousness, and in his lion's way beat it down, till he thought he had conquered even feeling. It was then that he acquired a deadly habit—a tearing of his heartstrings. Conquered feeling, had he? He was but learning to feel, learning to

appreciate a refined agony of feeling, to understand what hopelessness meant. He was naturally affectionate, a lover of his kind, yet of his own free will he had elected to live a life of solitude, to drag out a weary round of existence. The present is the only state we are, and can be, absolutely positive about, let persons say what they please. It is man's duty to make the most, the best, out of this present. Let the morrow take care of itself; do your duty, and leave the rest to God. The habit Knowles had acquired was that of reflection, and the question—are you making the best of your life?—troubled him as it always has every thinking creature; and, as is the way with every thinking creature, he could not tell to a certainty, but he had grave, very grave doubts. At that time, too, he read Ethel March's letter much oftener than he should have done. Still worse, he began reading—what was not written—between the lines, and interpreting the same, which was sheer folly, nothing more.

Pardon a simile.

If ever a man tumbles into a very deep hole, say a well, and looks up to see a little patch of sky overhead, he becomes dissatisfied, particularly if the hole be damp. He longs to get out, to get a little nearer the blue sky, to broaden his horizon; and the chances are a hundred to one that sooner or later he will make the necessary attempt to do so. John Knowles was in a very deep hole, indeed, and Ethel March's by no means clever letter was to him that little patch of blue sky. He, like the occupant

of the well, longed to get out, and to broaden his horizon.

That longing had not shaped itself into words, but it was there all the same, boiling and seething like a witch's caldron.

One day towards the end of the week, Knowles, in his shirt-sleeves, axe on shoulder, was returning from a hunt after cedar for fence-rails, when he met the incompetent inebriate, driving.

“Good-day,” said Knowles.

The doctor nodded and pulled up. “You’re still here,” he remarked.

Knowles did not like the man. He shrugged his shoulders without replying, and would have passed on, but the doctor began again to speak.

“Look here,” he said, “take my advice and leave this God-forsaken place at once. You’ve had the closest call of any man I know, nursing Swartz as you did.”

“How about my farm?”

“Sell it.”

Knowles smiled sarcastically.

“Sell it to Lochran, buy a new suit of clothes, burn all your old ones, and leave, or you may be sorry.”

The doctor drove on.

“Leave, or you may be sorry.” The words kept recurring to him for days afterwards; he thought of Swartz’s death and shuddered. He looked through the rain and the mist at the great dead rampikes; at the bare, lonely hills, the leafless poplars, and the

desolation ; the shorn hideousness—emblematic of his own barren life—filled him with forebodings.

The settlers were still dying, right and left. From one end to the other of the Opiongo, houses were closed. White, hopeless faces of dying men, women, and children looked out from closed windows into that world so many would never know again. Still the district was neglected—left to the care of one drunken brute, and a more useless sober one. Occasionally Knowles saw newspapers from the outside world. The town of T—, he read, was threatened by a similar outbreak. On the first appearance of the disease, boards of health were called, and medical aid was insisted upon by the government. While here, Knowles fumed and raved, and sent his mite towards the filling of that Departmental waste-paper basket, as above mentioned.

Several days after his conversation with the doctor he met Lochran's agent. He met him every week or so, going to, or coming from, the depot or camps. The doctor's advice as to selling the farm occurred to him ; in fact, it had been but seldom absent from his thoughts.

He had paid \$300 down for the land ; the improvements—house, stable, shed, and fence—he valued at another \$500. A round thousand would cover everything, excepting the live-stock.

He got into conversation with the agent, and informed him that he wished to sell. It so happened that Lochran wanted a farm to supply hay and oats for his mules and horses. It is possible the

doctor knew this when he mentioned his name to Knowles.

“How many acres have you cleared?” inquired the agent.

Knowles told him.

“Let us have a look at it.”

Accordingly they walked over it together.

“How much do you want for it, including live stock?”

“Fifteen hundred dollars.”

“That’s a goodish bit,” said the agent.

“Take it or leave it,” said Knowles, with affected unconcern.

“I’ll give you fourteen hundred.”

Knowles shook his head and began leisurely to fill his pipe.

“I’ll tell you to-morrow.” Away went the agent.

Knowles slept not a wink that night; he sat and thought till daybreak; then he read Ethel March’s letter again, and discovered much between the lines.

The next day, while he was working on his fence, the agent called.

“Improvin’?—that’s right,” he said, seating himself on a boulder.

Knowles nodded and continued his work. He felt horribly nervous. To sell meant liberty. His heart beat like a hammer; outwardly he appeared wonderfully indifferent.

“So you’ve made up your mind to sell?”

Knowles shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll tell you what—call it \$1,450, an' it's a bargain?"

Knowles laughed, "\$1,500 or nothing."

"You're mighty tight," said the agent, looking at him out of the corner of his eyes.

"It's worth it," said Knowles.

"Maybe 'tis, an' agin maybe 'tain't." The agent punctuated his remarks with thoughtful expectoration.

Knowles fitted a rail in place, and stepped back a little to inspect.

The agent glanced again at him, rose to his feet and buttoned up his coat. Knowles' feelings sank to zero. Was he going without another word? It certainly looked like it. He walked away ten paces or so. Knowles fitted in another rail, and, to all outward appearances, was not aware of the possible purchaser's retreat. The agent returned.

"It's a neat fence you're puttin' up."

"Not too rusty," said Knowles, shouldering a post.

The agent expectorated. "How much did you say you wanted?"

"Fifteen hundred."

"Done with you,—payable in three months. Guess Lochran's name's good?"

Knowles with difficulty restrained himself from cheering. A ton's weight seemed to fall from his shoulders at the words, scales dropped from his eyes, he saw and realized to the full what such a life, dragged out in never varying sameness, month after

month, year after year, away from his equals, was, and must eventually mean.

“ Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay ”

So sang the poet—so to all intents and purposes sang Knowles. When the agent had taken his departure, he went into his house, and wrote a letter to —it is needless to say, to whom. Such a letter! —silly, silly fool.

But then he had read so much between the lines, so much— Ah! he was stupid.

The letter written, away he went hot foot to post it.

He had never felt better or happier in his life. There was a slight rain falling, the sky was overcast, but he thought the sun was shining. There never had been such a day,—never, since the beginning of all things, such a glorious, exhilarating day!

He stopped for a drink at the brook which runs under the cross-logging, and, bending over it, saw his own happy ugly face in it, and grinned at the reflection. Then up the long hill he went—breasting it like a stag. You'd have thought it was a ladder to heaven he had found, he walked so joyously.

Arrived at Jenkins', he inquired about the stage, and was informed that it would leave the next morning at six o'clock ; he turned to go—paused at the door.

“ How is the diphtheria ? ” he inquired.

“ Old Tony Bartlett's got it,” was the reply.

“Poor old Tony—who’s looking after him?”
Jenkins shrugged his shoulders.

“Guess he’s looking after himself; there ain’t no one round here, as I knows of, blamed fool enough to risk his life for a useless old tramp like Tony—leastways, I wouldn’t. The doctor’s brought him physic, let him tend to himself; others a’ done it afore now, an’ I’ll have to do it agin.”

John Knowles looked Jenkins up and down. There was little admiration in the glance.

“I hope you will never die for the want of a little nursing, Mr. Jenkins,” said the Lion, and strode away.

Jenkins looked after him with a nasty light in his eyes. He noted the broad shoulders, the long stride, the resolute bearing, and eased his mind by the utterance of a few choice expletives, addressed apparently to the universe at large, Knowles being well out of hearing. He then retired to the sanctity of his own kitchen, where he cursed a small boy, who had just brought in an armful of wood, kicked his dog out by the back door, and finally soothed his agitation by a copious draught of whiskey, and an earnest prayer to his Satanic Majesty that Knowles would die at an early date.

Meanwhile the cause of all this hullabaloo was walking back along the road by no means as briskly as he had come, with a thoughtful expression on his face.

* * * * *

Two hours later old Tony, lying in a half doze with

several yards of dirty flannel wrapped round his hairy old throat, was aroused by a knock at the door.

“The doctor, I suppose,” he muttered, and called in a weak voice, “Come in.”

Enter stupidity!

Tony sat bolt upright,—astonishment gave him strength. For a moment he stared speechless, then he gave tongue :

“Mr. Knowles! Mr Knowles!” he screamed. “Holy Moses! get out of this, man dear. I’ve got it, don’t you know?—the dipthery. God A’mighty! you’ll get it. You’re a dead man. Get out—get out.” With outstretched shaking hand he pointed to the door.

Knowles, by way of answer, seated himself on the one chair the establishment could boast of, and smiled.

Tony was a good soul—he implored him to leave. Knowles begged him not to get excited; consequently, old Tony grew still more excited. Knowles lighted his pipe and smoked; Tony cooled down.

“What have you come here for?” he inquired.

“To look after you,” was the reply.

Tony collapsed.

Two days later the doctor called; Knowles opened the door for him; the doctor gasped.

“You here!” he exclaimed.

Knowles filled up most of the doorway, and certainly would have given the most sceptical the impression of being very much there.

“Are you mad?” was the doctor’s next inquiry, justifiable under the circumstances.

Knowles blushed, shrugged his shoulders, and said he hoped not.

“What are you doing?”

“Looking after Tony.”

The doctor whistled, but said nothing more save that the patient was doing well,—much better, in fact, than he had expected to find him.

For two terrible weeks Knowles stayed in that wretched hovel, cooked for the sick man, waited on him hand and foot, and,—so the doctor said—saved his life. Tony was out of danger. There was no earthly reason why Knowles should stay any longer, so he left.

Once more the light of renewed hope filled his eyes. Nothing could stop him now ; the stage left at the beginning of the next week ; he would go by it.

The following day was Wednesday. He employed his time by doing a little more fencing. Thursday and Friday passed away ; they were long days—but happy ones.

Friday night he had a strange dream. An angel appeared to him, and, taking him by the hand, told him he would now have his heart’s desire, and began leading him away.

He awakened, a smile of happiness forming itself upon his lips.

The day was just breaking ; he raised his head a little from the pillow, then let it fall back again with a slight moan.

His head was aching as though it would split ; in his throat he felt a strange tickling sensation.

He sat up in bed, and clasped his temples with his hands. On his white face was a look of anguish—in his heart misery and despair.

It had come to him at last !

He looked about the room with a vacant agony in his eyes, and shuddered. For once in his life, for a few moments, terror held him in its horrid grip. He moaned, and, holding his face in his hands, sat motionless for a time.

Then he rose from the bed, with some of the old manliness shining in his face, and dressed himself. Putting on a heavy overcoat, and wrapping something warm about his throat, he harnessed his horse, and drove rapidly to the doctor's. Arrived at the door, he knocked, and then retired twenty yards. A slatternly looking woman opened it, and in answer to his question, "Is the doctor at home?" informed him that he was not, but would be back that evening or the next day.

"Please tell him that Mr. Knowles is very ill, and would like to see him at once."

The woman promised to do so, and Knowles drove away.

The next day, Sunday, his headache had almost gone ; he felt better, though his throat was much more painful. In the afternoon the doctor called, said he was doing well, that he need not be alarmed, and left him the required medicine, promising to call again on Tuesday.

On Monday night Knowles' condition changed—and changed very much for the worse. On Tuesday morning he was seized with violent coughing. In the afternoon the doctor called, examined his patient, and shook his head. That night he stayed at the depot, and called again on Wednesday. Knowles was if anything a little worse : his breathing was becoming labored, the fits of coughing were more frequent. He was reading his Bible when the doctor entered. He looked up with a quiet smile, and in a weak voice said :

“I want you to tell me whether I am going to live or die. Do not be afraid of alarming me—but only tell me the truth.”

The doctor looked at him earnestly, his little pale blue eyes filled with honest tears.

“Mr. Knowles,” he said in a choked voice, “*you are going to die.*”

For a moment Knowles looked out of the window—it was a bright cold day—at the blue sky and the sunlight on the trees ; then he spoke again :

“I knew it,” he said.

Shortly afterwards the doctor went away, promising to call again in the evening.

* * * * *

When the doctor left Knowles, he was most decidedly upset ; he drove to the depot, where he found Lochran's agent just returned from the town of O—, where he had been transacting business for the firm. The agent had brought back with him a case of excellent Scotch whiskey.

The doctor's grief was most decidedly thirsty. To make a long story short, he got drunk and remained so till Friday morning, when he arose sober, and repentant. After breakfast he drove to Knowles' house, opened the door and walked in. All was silent. He entered the bedroom. Knowles lay much as he had left him, propped up with pillows, his Bible open upon his lap. The doctor stepped softly to the bedside, and laid his hand upon his shoulder. John Knowles had finished his work : *he was stone dead!*

Mechanically he picked up the Bible. His eye was attracted to a text which he read. It was this :

“Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me.”

From between the leaves something fluttered to the bed. It was the portrait of a beautiful girl in a ball dress, with the face of an angel, and great dark serious eyes.

Across the corner of the photograph the initials “E. M.” were written in a feminine hand.

* * * * *

There was one thing that Ethel March had omitted to mention in that very ordinary letter of hers, namely, that she had promised to marry that last admirer who slightly bored her. Her reason was an excellent one : he possessed *ten thousand a year!*

TO BEDLAM AND BACK.

CHAPTER I.

AT the beginning of April, in the year 1890, in the smoking-room of the Travellers' Club, there sat a blue-eyed, fair-complexioned, young Englishman, by the name of Richard Carew, with a fragrant cigar between his lips and the latest number of *Punch* open upon his knees. Just as he turned over the last page a tall, broad-shouldered young man, with a flower in his button-hole, sauntered in, caught Carew's eye and bowed. He was a hearty, cheerful looking individual, with kindly steady eyes, who, if one can judge at all by appearances, looked as though he thoroughly enjoyed life.

It is very probable that he did. He possessed £10,000 a year, an excellent digestion,—which the ignorant erroneously term a good heart,—and a baronetcy. He was in his twenty-eighth year, and so far had escaped matrimony. Certainly, he had much to be thankful for.

He drew an arm-chair to the cheery fire burning at the end of the room, lit a cigarette, thrust his long legs out to their fullest extent, and prepared to be comfortable.

Carew laid the *Punch* on the table, and rising strolled over to the fireplace, flicked the ash off his cigar with his little finger, turned his broad shoulders to the blaze, and remarked :

“ Beastly weather ! ”

“ Shocking bad,” was the reply.

The two men smoked in silence for a few moments.

“ I say, Wortley,” said Carew, “ heard devilish rum yarn last night at the Athenæum. Travers spun it. You know Travers : tall, fair-haired chap, willowy legs and a stoop. Clever beggar : writes for the *Saturday* ! ”

“ Yes, I recollect the man ; met him last October grouse-shooting. Devilish neat shot.”

“ Shot ! Don’t look much like a shot.”

“ He is though, very good, indeed.”

“ Well, the yarn he told me knocks any cock-eyed I ever heard. You know the old boy’s as full of fads as any old woman of aches and pains, and his latest is the study of the supernatural. Well, it appears some Johnny or other, whom he was talking to, informed him, with a grin, that if ghosts were his game all he had to do was to put up at a house in Morton Gardens,—No 2. That it had been standing empty for five years, or thereabouts, and was chuck full of ghosts and all that sort of truck. Well, what does the old boy do but stay there overnight, about a week ago ; and this is what he told me, and says he is willing to swear to. He said the house was old and very much out of repair ; that at the head

of the stairs there is a big double room divided by heavy *portières*. In it he found a decent enough arm-chair, standing in front of an old fireplace, before which lay a good-sized pile of wood. Building a fire, Travers proceeded to make himself comfortable. He had brought with him half a dozen candles, a flask of Scotch, another large one filled with water, his pipe and baccy, a novel to review, and a revolver.

“All went on pleasantly enough till midnight, when suddenly he said he felt a curious sort of chill run through him, and, why he could not tell, he turned and looked at the *portières*. They were slowly drawn aside without the faintest sound, and the next instant a figure, dim and indistinct, like the figure of a woman, stood before him. He said he felt as though his hair was standing on end. He was too horror-stricken to speak, but sat staring at the apparition for what seemed an hour, till, silently as it had come, it disappeared. Travers says he has had enough of the supernatural for the present, and wouldn’t take twenty pounds to pass such a night again.”

“ Didn’t know the old chap was subject to the D. T.’s.”

“ D. T.’s be hanged !”

“ Do you mean to tell me, Carew, that you believe such utter bunkum ? If he hadn’t been drinking he’d been taking opium. Those chaps who write often get into that habit.”

“ No, I don’t believe he ever takes opium, and I

know he seldom drinks. It is certainly deuced strange."

"Pshaw ! it's his imagination."

"Look here, old chap, would you pass a night alone in that house ?"

"Yes, I think I would."

"Well, I wouldn't, and I'll bet a pound you wouldn't last the night."

"Make it five pounds."

"All right, a fiver."

"Done with you."

"Where are Travers' rooms ?"

"Don't know, but you're sure to find him at the Athenæum about five. He's always there playing billiards with What's-his-name at that hour."

"I'll look him up this afternoon."

"By the way, are you going to Lady Simpson's this evening ?"

Wortley shook his head.

"No, I think not. Too much Browning you know. Never read a line of Browning in my life ; never intend to, life's too short."

Carew laughed.

"Well, I will. Elise Seaward will be there. Pretty little American woman, heaps of go. Old stick-in-the-mud Worsley's awfully gene on her. The old duffer's lots of tin ; made soap or soda-water or something ; little American can't stand him though. Hullo ! there's Hazlewood," as a tall, dark-bearded man entered the hall, into which they could see from their position in the smoking-room. "Thought he

was in Norway, or Patagonia, or somewhere. Must go and talk to the old boy. Ta ta, Wortley," and Carew went after the gentleman from Patagonia or somewhere.

Wortley, left to himself, lighted a cigar and began pondering over his bet ; and the more he thought of it, the less he liked it.

"Nice mess I'm in," he mused. "For a miserable five pounds I'm to spend a night in a tumbledown sort of place, that has been empty for the Lord knows how long. Upon my soul, even here, the very thought of that woman pulling aside the *portières* makes me feel squeamish. Of course it's all nonsense. That old muddle-headed Travers must have been dreaming. Devilish uncanny! Wish to heaven I hadn't made the bet. Have to see it through now, though. That beggar Carew would chaff the life out of me if I didn't." He glanced at his watch. "By Jove ! it's half-past four, time to see Travers."

A few minutes later he hailed a passing hansom.

"To the Athenæum Club," he said, jumping in.

Wortley was in luck. He had just paid his cab-fare, when another hansom drew up, and out of it stepped Travers, who nodded to our hero.

"The very man I wanted to see. Come in and have a B. and S. This weather takes it out of one."

"Thank you," said Travers ; "don't mind if I do."

When they were comfortably ensconced in easy-chairs in the delightful smoking-room of that most delightful of clubs, each puffing a fragrant cigarette, Wortley remarked :

"Just left Carew at the Travellers' ; told me awful rum yarn of which you were the hero."

Travers blew a ring of smoke from his lips, watched it float slowly upwards, and said :

"Indeed ? "

"About a haunted house you know, in some gardens. Forget the name exactly. Morton, I think, or Horton ? "

"I wish Carew hadn't said anything about it. One doesn't care about being discussed as the hero of anything so ridiculous to nineteenth century ideas, as a ghost story." He smiled. "You know. Wortley, even a journalist would like to maintain a reputation for soberness or saneness."

Wortley felt a little guilty, remembering what he had jokingly said about D. T.'s and opium.

The man beside him seemed to read his thought. He continued :

"I was not 'in liquor,' as our friends to the eastward would say ; and although I admire De Quincey, I am not sufficiently his disciple to follow his mad lead." He paused and puffed thoughtfully at his cigarette for a few moments. "On my honor, Wortley,"—he turned to him with a solemn look on his face,—"as surely as we are sitting here, the wraith of some poor woman, wronged I am sure, perhaps foully murdered, appeared to me in that awful room. My God, man, I can never forget that night."

"Crazy as a loon !" said Wortley to himself.

"You know," continued Travers, "one other

man beside myself spent a night in that house, so I am told. It was two years ago. The morning following he was found seated in a chair, a look of horror on his face, stark dead!"

"Good God, man!" Wortley burst forth, "do you believe all that?"

The man before him leant his head upon his hands.

"Wortley," he said quietly, "there are many things in this wonderful world impossible to understand; that there is an affinity between the dead, a marvellous sympathy between the spirit of the departed whom we have known and loved, and ourselves, I believe, but I cannot understand. That the visitations of that night were realities, and not the disordered fancies of 'a mind diseased,' I believe, but, alas!"—he shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "Come now," he continued, rising, "I expected Boswell for our usual afternoon's bout at billiards. He hasn't turned up. It is six o'clock—I have waited long enough—what do you say to a game?"

But Wortley declined, saying he didn't feel in the vein. The fact was, Travers' earnest manner, if it had done nothing else, had made him heartily curse the scepticism which had tempted him to accept Carew's bet. Not to go through with it, or attempt to do so now, to a man of his nature was out of the question.

"I—I say, Travers," he said hesitatingly, as they strolled towards the billiard room. "The fact of the matter is, I made a bet with Carew that I

would pass the night in your charming house. Whom can I apply to for leave, and, by the way, where is the house?"

"Look here, Wortley," said his companion, stopping dead, "don't you do it. You have plenty of pluck and nerve, I don't doubt, but why run a chance of injuring both?"

"Can't help it," was the reply; "bet's made too late to retract. You can understand the situation."

Travers nodded.

"The agent for the property went through Harrow with me. I'll write to him saying you are a friend of mine, and desire to see the place. I'm sure he'll give you the keys. They have given up all hope of finding a tenant by this time, and talk of pulling it down. Wait two minutes, and I'll write you the note."

Travers disappeared into the reading-room, leaving Wortley to his own reflections, which were far from gay.

The note which Wortley received a few minutes later was addressed to Augustus Boggs, Esq., 10 Whitehall Place.

"It will be too late to see him this evening, I'm afraid," said Travers.

"Oh, to-morrow will be plenty of time. Many thanks for the note. Sorry to have troubled you. If I live through to-morrow night, I'll tell you all about it." Wortley nodded a smiling *au revoir*, and walked away.

That night he went to bed with a curious feeling

that something very much out of the common was pending. He could not rest, but lay tossing about till the first faint light of a London morning stole leaden-like between his blinds, then his eyes closed, and he slept till ten o'clock.

On awakening, the recollection of Travers' conversation came back to him, but daylight dispersed his misgivings, and by the time he had finished a substantial breakfast he was fully possessed of the belief that that gentleman's mind was most certainly disordered. He accordingly called at 10 Whitehall Place, presented his card and Travers' letter, and a moment later was requested to step into the private office of Mr. Boggs.

Mr. Boggs was a short, dapper little man, with a round beaming face, and a round shining bald head, who looked liked any one but the agent for a haunted house.

“So you wish to look over No. 2 Morton Gardens? to be sure, to be sure! Why not?”

“Travers made me rather interested in the place, so I thought I'd have a look at it.”

“To be sure, to be sure! Why not?” murmured the dapper gentleman.

“I hear you are thinking of pulling it down?”

“Yes, yes. As it is, it is impossible to get a tenant. People object to living in those mouldy old places, and I don't blame them.” Mr. Boggs paused and reflectively rubbed his chin. “Ah!—the—keys,—you want the keys, of course. Benedict!”

“Yes, sir.”

Enter a boy who bore an amusing likeness to his chief, inasmuch as he was fat, had a round bullet head, and a beaming merry face.

“The keys, Benedict,” said Mr. Boggs.

“Yes, sir.” Exit boy.

Sir Arthur Wortley smiled.

“A good boy,—a very good boy,” said Boggs, “Takes an interest in things. Such a boy is bound to go on. Dear me, Sir Arthur, it is marvellous how that boy picks things up. I like the lad.”

Enter promising youth with keys.

“Ah! here they are: the big one for the hall door, the brass one for the back door, and the small one for the two doors into the big room at the head of the stairs.”

“Thank you, Mr. Boggs.”

“And Travers, to be sure! How is Travers? How well I remember him at dear old Harrow! Merry young dogs we were in those days. ‘*Tempus fugit*,’ as we used to say,—about all the Latin they could knock into my stupid head. You see Travers often, I suppose? I don’t. Remember me to him. Good lad, Travers,—very good lad.”

Enter fat boy with card.

“Sharpley of Gray’s Inn. Ahem!” Mr. Boggs coughed, Wortley rose to his feet.

“I must be going now. Good-morning, Mr. Boggs, and much obliged.”

“Not at all, Sir Arthur. Pleased to do anything for you. Good-morning.”

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Sir Arthur left the office of Mr. Augustus Boggs he drove to a gunsmith's on the Strand, where he bought a 38-calibre revolver of American manufacture.

He then drove to his rooms, dismissed his hansom, telling the driver to call for him there at eight o'clock that same evening. Entering he laid his purchase on his dressing-table, sauntered into his sitting-room, lit a cigarette, touched an electric bell, and seating himself in an easy-chair, smoked thoughtfully. A gentle knock a moment later heralded the approach of his valet.

“Tompkins,” he said to that individual, who stepped noiselessly into the room.

“Yes, sir.”

“Let me see, what had I better take? Half a dozen bottles of soda water, and a bottle of Scotch to begin with.”

“My heye, ain’t ‘e a-goin’ it?” soliloquised Tompkins, internally a little surprised; outwardly his clean-shaven face wore about as much expression as the sunny side of a water-melon in July.

“Yes, sir,” he said aloud.

“Or wouldn’t a couple bottles of fizz be better,

Tompkins, for a beverage, with biscuits and cheese for solids, and innumerable cigars, for a man sitting up all night? Which would you recommend,—fizz, or Scotch and soda?"

Tompkins was a privileged person, a *bon vivant*, a man whose opinion was well worth having in matters of eating and drinking. There was no better judge of a cigar or port, in London. There never was a valet who stole so little, or was more proficient in the art of lying. Tompkins knew the value of his opinion, and gave it carefully and with due deliberation.

" Whiskey and soda is a hex'lent and hexhilarating beverage, sir; and as such I cannot recommend it too 'ighly. When I says a hex'lent beverage, I mean when taken as a gentleman like you takes it, Sir Arthur, hin moderation. Would I recommend it, you did me the honor to ask, Sir Arthur, in preference to fizz with cheese and biscuits, I don't know as 'ow I wouldn't. Them as has constitoootions——"

" Tompkins, Tompkins, constitutions, I beg of you."

" I beg your pardon, Sir Arthur," (Tompkins looked distinctly hurt), " I was merely goin' on to say, that them as 'as constitoo-tu-tutions, constitutions like 'ogs, Sir Arthur, might hindiscriminately mix their victuals, the latter with the former, or *terry fernny*. Hin consequence I might venture——"

" Please don't, Tompkins. I'll take your advice." ("Blest if I know what it is!" he muttered to himself.) " Scotch and soda, it shall be half a dozen

soda and a bottle of Scotch. By the way, Tompkins, are there any cigars left?"

" 'Eaps, Sir Arthur, 'eaps."

" Weren't those last a little green, Tompkins?"

" I won't deny it, Sir Arthur—a trifle, the merest trifle hunder seasoned, sir,—hunder seasoned."

" I thought as much,—let me see. Half a dozen sodas,"—checking items off on his fingers,—" one Scotch, biscuits and cheese, cigars. Anything else, Tompkins?"

" Light literatoor, Sir Arthur."

" Excellent idea! Of course, a novel! What is there in that line?"

" 'The Dook's Daughter,' Sir Arthur: morals and general tone 'igh, very 'igh, Sir Arthur."

" Nothing better than that?"

" There's 'Hairy Fairy Lillian.' My bookseller——"

" Magnificent! grand! 'Lillian' by all means. Pack her up with the cheese. What else do I want?"

" If, Sir Arthur, you'd do me the honor to tell me for what you are preparin', I might be able to drop a 'int in all modesty, Sir Arthur."

" Exactly, Tompkins. Well, I'm going to camp out in an empty room for the night."

" 'Ow about a bed, Sir Arthur, an' blankets?"

" No, Tompkins, just a couple of railway rugs."

" Yes, sir."

" Pack them all up as neatly and in as small a space as possible."

" 'Ow about a Gladstone, Sir Arthur?"

"Capital! Put 'em all in, young woman, cheese and all. Oh, by the way, I must have some light."

"Candles, Sir Arthur,—'andier packed."

"Very good, Tompkins. I think that is all. Have everything ready by eight."

"Yes, sir."

At five minutes past eight Sir Arthur stepped into his hansom and was driven rapidly away.

It was just the sort of night that often follows a fine day in London. At sunset a raw east wind had sprung up, which sent the old gentlemen shivering into their comfortable houses or clubs, like bees into a hive at the first white frost. By nine o'clock a fine rain was falling, blown in thin sheets along the streets. The near lamps flickered; those farther away shone like tiny moons on a misty night, white and faint through the falling rain. An occasional pedestrian hurried past with bent head and umbrella at an angle. Cabs with waterproofed drivers rattled by, bearing their cloaked occupants to balls, operas, or concerts.

Gradually the streets became narrower and quieter, fewer pedestrians toiled past with bent heads, the region of cabs seemed left behind. At length, in a small square filled with trees, before a gloomy looking edifice standing by itself, a little way back from the street, the driver pulled up:

"'Ere we are, sir."

Sir Arthur peered out through the driving rain at the ebon-black pile, and did not feel comforted.

"Are you sure this is No. 2?" he inquired.

"Certain, sir," said the driver, lifting the well-packed Gladstone to the ground. "The gent as lives over the way I've drove home many a night," he continued. "Carry this in, sir?—yes, sir. It do be a ghostly lookin' place an' no mistake. Thank 'e, sir," and he pocketed his fare after depositing the Gladstone at the door. A moment later came the rattle of wheels as he drove away, and left our hero feeling far from heroic, standing in darkness and rain, at the door of No. 2, fumbling in his pocket for the keys, which he almost hoped he had lost. Even this short reprieve was denied him : they were there safe enough. "The big one for the hall door," he murmured, quoting Boggs, "the brass one for the back door, and the small one for the two doors into—— Oh, hang the keyhole!" he muttered, missing it for the third time. He got the key in at last, click went the bolt as it shot back with a raspy, rusty, supernaturally loud clink. He pushed the door open and entered. His footsteps echoed strangely in the hall. Striking a match, he opened his bag. Blessings on Tompkins! the candles were the first thing he saw. Lighting one, he found himself to be in a wide lofty hall, with a broad stairway leading to the floor above. There was something eerie and ghostly in the darkness, which the tiny flame of the candle seemed but to accentuate. Over the floor, the stairs, the sills of the windows, over every ledge or crevice where dust could lodge, it lay a melancholy drab winding-sheet. How many times in the dim past, perchance, had dainty feet tripped up and down the wide stair-

way? How often had sweet living laughter echoed in that dim hall? Is there any place in this sad world sadder than some old deserted house? The pathway leading to the door overgrown with weeds, the once well-kept grounds a wilderness, the windows that in the past perchance had framed the smiling, dimpled, lovely faces of sweet and gentle women, stare vacant, sightless, on the occasional passer-by like the eyes of the blind. The house itself, a body soulless! A temple whose gods have been defiled, whose holy of holies has been desecrated by sacrilegious hands! A sepulchre of dead hopes! A monument to poor human vanity! Oh the frailty of it all! oh the desolation! oh the pathos, and sadness of it!

Even in the humblest of abodes, some Irish peasant's cabin, the door hanging upon one rusty hinge, the rickety old table by the window, the broken baby chair,—what a tale is there, written not in books! A genuine live human story of love and hope and sorrow: what food for reflection! Even in some old camping-ground far away in the solemn wilderness, the charred logs, the row of pegs still standing, the withered brush that made the wanderer's bed, the great dark pines, silent, grim, spectral—how unutterably sad are these sights that meet us at every turn, these emblems of man's mortality! And Wortley, peering into the black shadows of that deserted hall, felt awed, and fearful of what he knew not, of the ghostliness of darkness and desertion. He determined to explore the premises.

On his left was a window boarded up, on his right two doors opened into the hall. With his loaded revolver in his pocket,—though he tried to laugh off the nervousness that was comforted by the possession of such a weapon,—he turned the handle of the first door. It was unlocked and opened easily. The room was entirely empty, save for an old bookcase standing in one corner. From this room he entered a second, in which a table stood, with several chairs round it. On the wall hung an old engraving of one of Dante's pictures in a tarnished gilt frame. There was also an oak sideboard standing against the wall. To this room there were three doors,—the one by which he had entered, with a second, facing it, leading into the servants' quarters. These he went through carefully, returning again to the room which, judging by the table, sideboard, etc., he concluded must have been the dining-room. The third door out of it led into the hall. He then proceeded upstairs, carrying his Gladstone with him, to continue his investigations. On this floor a passage ran the full length of the house, with two doors opening on to it.

“They must lead to the two rooms Boggs mentioned,” he remarked to himself. “Let me see, the small key for the two rooms at the top of the stairs on the right. Here it is.”

He drew it from his pocket, fitted it into the key-hole of the first door, click went the lock, he turned the handle and entered, to find himself standing in the back portion of a large double room, divided from the front by heavy *portières* of an artistic but rough-

looking material. On examination he found them to be made of a coarse hand-worked eastern fabric, of curious design. Only one window looked out from the back part of the room, and it was securely bolted on the inside. Pushing the *portières* aside he entered the front. In the centre stood a small table with a fairly comfortable looking arm-chair standing by it, in front of a large old-fashioned fireplace, beside which he was pleased to observe a pile of wood, sufficiently big to keep a cheery fire burning during the night.

In addition to the arm-chair there were two others, one of which lay in a corner minus two front legs ; the other was in good repair. There was also one large window looking out on the street, and a door, as in the back portion opening on the passage. His next move was to investigate the third and upper story which consisted of a suite of six rooms entirely empty of furniture, with the exception of one which contained an old rosewood writing-table, evidently at one time the possession of a lady. Besides an ingenious folding desk on the top, there were four drawers, two on either side in front. These he found to be unlocked. The first three he opened were empty. In the fourth he found a lady's driving glove, a yard of faded blue ribbon, and a copy of Owen Meredith's "Lucile." Opening it, on the fly-leaf he found the inscription "Pauline Astley, with her grandfather's love," and the date, " 16th October, 1884."

"I will keep these as a memento of this night," he said, pocketing them.

He then returned to the front portion of the room downstairs, lit a good fire, drew the arm-chair and table up to it, and unpacking his Gladstone, made himself as comfortable with the contents as possible.

“This isn’t half bad,” he remarked, as he seated himself, with his feet encased in a pair of comfortable slippers, which Tompkins’ thoughtfulness had not omitted, a travelling rug at his back for a pillow, a fragrant Manilla between his lips, and a cheerful blaze leaping and glowing before him. Yielding himself to the soothing influences of warmth, good tobacco, and a refreshing Scotch and soda, his nervousness rapidly disappeared. A pleasant drowsiness was stealing over him; he languidly began cutting the leaves of the novel his valet had provided, but, ere he had finished, his head nodded forward on his chest, the cigar, two-thirds finished, dropped from his lips, and he slept. Half-past ten struck from a neighboring church clock, eleven, half-past, and Arthur Wortley still slumbered. The fire was rapidly dying out. The silence in that deserted house at midnight was so great that the ticking of his watch in his waistcoat pocket, could be heard ten feet away.

Twenty-five minutes passed; it lacked but five of midnight. Tick, tick, tick, two and a half minutes more went by. Then like a flash there was a change in the sleeping man: he sat bolt upright, staring about with wide-open startled eyes. An electric shock could not have been more sudden. One instant he was sleeping like a babe, the next he was broad awake, every faculty on the alert, with terror at his heart of

something nameless. He peered into the gloomy corners of the room, and tried to shake off the fear that oppressed him by action. Stooping down he stirred the fire, placing more wood upon it. Then from far away over the roofs of countless London houses, a sound came floating to his ears—a church clock striking midnight. He listened like one spellbound. The very beating of his heart seemed stilled. One—two—three—four—every stroke he counted them. Twelve! came wafted over the roofs, faint but clear as the trumpet of the Archangel Gabriel would be to his throbbing senses. Then the beating of his heart, in the silence that followed, sounded in his ears like the panting of a hound after running.

Arthur Wortley was an English gentleman, and as brave as the God of our fathers has made that breed; but sitting alone in that dim room, with a strange feeling that something incomprehensible, something beyond the power of human reasoning, was going to happen, he felt the perspiration standing on his forehead, while his hands grew cold and clammy.

Ten seconds might have elapsed since the stroke of twelve, when suddenly he experienced that curious feeling that he was not alone. With a sensation as though his hair was bristling on his head, he turned and faced the *portières*. Slowly they were drawn aside, and before his horror-stricken eyes there stood the figure of a woman. With one fair, slender hand she pressed the heavy curtain's fold; the other was laid upon her breast. With head bent forward, her great dark eyes, like wells of sorrow charged to the

brim with tears that would not flow, with a wonderful soft brilliancy in them, like the white light of a star, were fastened on his face. But oh, the unutterable sadness, the unutterable pathos in that glance! If the soul looks forth from the eyes, oh, what a desolate fate was hers! For years after the recollection of it haunted him.

As noiselessly as she had come, she drew back, allowing the heavy curtains to fall into place, and disappeared behind them. Like one spellbound, he sat gazing where she had stood, powerless to act for the time being. That a vision, some supernatural being, had stood before him, he did not for one instant doubt.

Suddenly he heard a sound. Could he be going mad? He pressed his hands to his temples. By an effort that left him trembling, he regained the mastery of his faculties. He listened. The sound came from one of the rooms below. Some one was speaking. Taking, as it were, his courage in both hands, he rose, stepped lightly to the door and opened it. Here the voice was more distinct, but, strive as he might, he could not make out the words. Then he heard quick steps as of some one running. Then his very blood was frozen in his veins by the piercing scream of a woman.

“Good God!” he exclaimed, “can it be some real living creature, and is some one murdering her?” Springing back to the table, he picked up one of the candles, and, with his revolver in his hand, rushed to the head of the stairs.

“Hullo there!” he shouted, and went down them three steps at a time. In the passage he paused a moment, undecided which door to enter.

“Where are you?” he cried out. His voice startled him, so strange it sounded in the empty hall. He listened for an answer; none came. The beating of his heart alone broke the terrible stillness. He searched every room as he had done on first entering the house; but not a human being could he discover. Filled with a superstitious fear, he returned to his arm-chair in the room above. He stirred the fire up so that it burned brightly, quaffed off a tumbler of Scotch and soda, and again armed with his revolver sat awaiting further developments. Not another sound disturbed him that night.

The following morning he drew aside the *portières* and looked into the back part of the room.

“I’ll swear I pushed that door to,” he exclaimed, “and now it is standing wide open. Extremely strange!”

Next, something white on the floor attracted his attention.

“Hullo, what’s that?” He walked over to the object, and, stooping, picked it up. It was a lady’s pocket-handkerchief.

“The plot thickens,” he remarked. “Never heard of a ghost using a pocket-handkerchief.”

He carried it to the front window, and examined it. In one corner, embroidered in lilac-colored silk, was the name “PAULINE.”

CHAPTER III.

AN hour after discovering the handkerchief, Sir Arthur, arrayed in a dressing-gown, seated himself in a comfortable arm-chair before a cheery fire in his own room, none the worse for his night in a haunted house. In answer to a ring, his valet appeared with razor and towels, and proceeded to shave him.

Sir Arthur, with lathered upraised chin, reclined in silence. His knit brow, and steady stare at nothing in particular, showed plainly that he was thinking—possibly of the mysterious Pauline—as who under the circumstances would not have been?

“Pardon the liberty, Sir Arthur,” said his valet, breaking in upon his reflections.

“Well, Tompkins?”

“A gray 'air, Sir Arthur.”

“Is it possible?” reflectively.

“Why, two—three—four—goodness me! a 'ole bunch of 'em, Sir Arthur, hover the left temple, Sir Arthur.”

“Nonsense, Tompkins!”

“As I 'ope to be saved, Sir Arthur.”

“A glass, Tompkins!”

“Yes, sir.”

“Finish shaving me first.”

“Yes, Sir Arthur.”

Among his other accomplishments Tompkins was an excellent barber. His deft hands carried the keen razor swiftly over his master’s chin. The operation over, he presented him with a small hand-mirror.

“Hover the left temple, Sir Arthur.”

Sir Arthur looked at himself. It struck him his face was paler than usual, and, sure enough, there was a patch of gray hair as big as a shilling piece over his left temple.

“Tompkins,” he said, turning to him with a well-affected air of unconcern, “did you ever know a man’s hair whitened by a sudden shock?”

His valet eyed him curiously—quick as a flash. He had small bead-like eyes, of remarkable brilliancy, though of a pale watery blue in colour, and he possessed, unknown to the gentlemen before him, a faculty of “sizing up” a man, or taking in a situation by a glance almost electrical in its velocity.

“I did, Sir Arthur,” he replied.

“Yes?” interrogatively.

Tompkins stropped his razor thoughtfully for a few seconds ere replying, then he said :

“In Washington Territory, in the United States, I seen a man shot stone dead through the brain by his partner with a 44-calibre Smith and Wesson—Sir Arthur.” His valet, it seemed, had almost forgotten that little mark of respect with which hitherto he had either prefaced or finished every sentence. Sir Arthur glanced sharply at him. There was a curious glitter in his eyes as he continued speaking

while he stropped the razor. "He buried his partner within ten feet of his shack, and left the place. A month later, in Montana, where he went, happening to wake up one night—it was summer time, with a full moon shining; his bed was opposite a window,—and full in front of that thar window, a little bit from it, with the moonlight shining on his face, stood the man whom he had shot a month before, and buried hundreds of miles away. 'Jake,' said the dead man." Tompkins hesitated. "No, no, I'm wrong, Sir Arthur, his name it wer William, called by his pals Bill. 'Bill,' said the dead man, 'do ye mind me?' His face had turned a greenish colour with a queer darkish mark high up on his right cheek near the nose, where the ball had gone in. But Jake—I mean Bill—never answered him. He had sat bolt upright at the sight, but when he heard him speak he jist says, 'Oh, my God!' says he, and fell back insensible; and when he come to his senses agen it wer four days later, and they as wer with him said he had the fever. Well, next time he seen himself, there was a white patch as big as a Yankee dollar just about the same place as yours is, Sir Arthur."

Tompkins closed the razor, put it in its place, and withdrew. As he passed out of the room he spoke again.

"Beg pardon, Sir Arthur, your bath is ready, sir."

When the door closed, Sir Arthur leant back in his chair and whistled, then he remarked, apparently to the clock on his dressing-table :

"He's an interesting devil, and no doubt, if he had his deserts, he'd be in the penitentiary to-day. He dropped the cockney, too, the scoundrel. Bill, was it? Twenty to one in anything, it was Jake, or 'write me down an ass.'"

At five o'clock that afternoon he called at the Athenæum. He had made up his mind to take Travers into his confidence. He found him as usual playing billiards with Boswell. Lighting a cigarette, he took a seat to await the finish of the game. While Boswell was scoring, Travers spoke to him.

"Have you won your bet?" he inquired.

Wortley nodded.

"You stayed there last night?"

"I did, and came here on purpose to tell you all about it. I promised I would, you know."

Travers glanced at him curiously. "Engaged this evening?"

"Free till ten, when I'll have to look in at Mrs. Mellvil's."

Boswell finished a break of thirty-three.

"Dine with me here at seven?"

"With pleasure."

Travers returned to his game; Wortley sought an easy-chair before the fire in the smoking-room.

After dinner Travers suggested an adjournment to his chambers.

"We can discuss the whole thing from the beginning there, without fear of interruption," he said.

To this Wortley assented. On their arrival Travers

produced a jar of fine Virginia leaf, and a brace of famous old churchwardens.

“In the club I conform to established usages, and endeavor to content myself with a cigar; in the sanctity of my chamber I find that true happiness and a pipe go hand in hand, so to speak. I verily believe I never wrote a decent article—if I ever wrote one at all—without a pipe in my mouth. Will you try one, or do you prefer a cigar? I have some Manillas here, excellent; imported direct by a friend—smuggled, I fear.”

But our hero accepted a pipe, and when they had both filled and lighted, he turned to his friend.

“Look here, Travers,” he said, “I’ve made a discovery.”

“Indeed, and pray what have you discovered?”

“That your ghost uses a pocket-handkerchief.”

“Humph!” said Travers.

Then Wortley gave him an exact account of his experience.

“What do you intend doing?” was Travers’ next question,

“Renting the house for a year, and sifting the matter to the bottom.”

“Would it not be the simpler plan to put it in the hands of a detective?”

“Possibly, but it would be the less interesting way. I may employ a detective before I’ve finished, but not now. Let us work it up together, Travers, and say nothing about it to any one?”

Travers smoked for a few minutes in silence.

"She is one of three things," he said, "either a somnambulist, a lunatic, or a criminal."

Wortley looked thoughtful.

"If the last," continued Travers, "you may be sure she has accomplices. It is not improbable that the house may be a rendezvous of thieves, and this midnight appearance a little game of theirs to frighten people away."

"I don't believe she's a criminal," said Wortley, "she's far and away too beautiful."

Travers smiled.

"Well, what do you say to my proposal as to solving the mystery ourselves—at any rate having a try at it?"

"How will you go about it?"

"Camp there at night, and on her next appearance either make her prisoner, or follow and watch her."

"Yes, it's not a bad scheme, and might suggest an idea for an article if nothing else. You saw her plainly?"

"Distinctly; I had three candles lighted; she wasn't more than twelve feet away."

"What sort of a looking creature was she?"

"A little over medium height I should say, dark, with great, black eyes that looked as though overflowing in tears. My dear fellow,"—Wortley waxed enthusiastic,—"I never saw such hopeless sorrow depicted on a beautiful face before, and I hope to heaven I never shall again. The very thought of it makes me long to weep," he wound up, with a smile.

"How beautiful! if sorrow had not made
Sorrow more beautiful than beauty's self,'"

quoted Travers, "a perfect Niobe."

Wortley glanced at his watch. "Half-past nine, by Jove! I must be going."

"When do you propose spending another night there?"

"How would to-morrow night suit you?"

"I can manage it, I think," Travers replied.

"Very good, I'll see Mr. Boggs to-morrow morning about the house. Dine with me at seven at the Travellers'?"

"One moment. You may have noticed how thickly the dust lay everywhere. Did it occur to you to look for footprints?"

"It didn't. Capital. You've missed your vocation, Travers; you ought to be a detective."

Travers smiled. "You would have thought of it most likely yourself."

"Not I. Don't forget our engagement at seven at the Travellers'. Good-night."

"*Au revoir à demain.*"

The following day Wortley found it an easy matter to come to satisfactory terms with Boggs, with regard to the renting of No. 2 Morton Gardens. Having given up all idea of finding a tenant, that bustling little gentleman was only too delighted to get such a one as Sir Arthur, and, though naturally a little surprised, delivered him the keys without question, merely expressing a hope that it would suit,

and offering to make any necessary repairs at the expense of the firm he represented.

After dining, Wortley and Travers, with the necessary creature comforts, and each armed with a revolver and a heavy oak stick, drove to the scene of their vigil.

“The first thing to be done,” said Travers, “is to examine the floor carefully and see if we can find traces in the dust of other footprints than those of the young woman.”

Accordingly, having deposited the several articles they had brought with them in the upper front room, they lighted four candles, and carefully examined the floor where the woman passed, between the *portières* and the door. And sure enough, as Travers had supposed, they found the prints of a pair of small narrow slippers, which they followed without much difficulty to the head of the stairs. Down them, however, the traces were not discernible.

“Owing to her skirts sweeping the steps behind her,” said Travers, who seemed to be rapidly developing a proficiency in trail-reading, which would have done credit to a red Indian.

In the hall and lower rooms, especially round the table in the dining-room, they found numerous traces of the little slippers. They also found through the house the track of a larger shoe, which Wortley declared to be his.

There still remained one part of the establishment to be explored, namely, the basement, where, if the house were used as a rendezvous of thieves, they

might expect to find traces of those gentry. But nothing further was disclosed, save three cases of empty bottles, and innumerable cobwebs. Here the woman herself had evidently not been, as a minute inspection of the dust-covered brick flooring brought no further traces to light.

“It only remains for us to wait till midnight for the appearance of your beautiful Niobe,” said Travers, “and in the mean time let us return to the upper front room, and make ourselves as comfortable as possible.”

This they accordingly did.

“I think you will admit the chances are that your criminal theory is wrong?” remarked Wortley, standing with his back to the fire which they had kindled.

“It certainly looks as if she had no accomplices,” was the reply, “in consequence of which, I dare say that part of the theory is wrong.” Travers gazed thoughtfully into the fire.

“You still believe her to be——?”

“A somnambulist or a lunatic; I do, my dear fellow, and I am inclined to believe her to be the latter.”

“Horrible!” said Wortley, with a shudder.

Travers had had a busy day, and, in consequence, about eleven, began to feel distinctly drowsy, and by half-past had fallen into a sound sleep. Wortley, whose mind was too full of the mysterious Pauline to permit of slumber, sat with his feet to the fire, puffing a well-seasoned old briar. At length, he

again heard the church clock strike the hour of midnight. He did not this time, however, feel the same superstitious dread as he had experienced on the former occasion. Nevertheless, as he turned and faced the *portières* expectantly, he could not help admitting to himself that his heart did beat a little more quickly, and that he did feel those curious creepy sensations that we have all felt at least once in our lives. A quarter of an hour passed. A half hour. One o'clock struck, and all was silent. Wortley began to feel drowsy ; his head nodded forward on his chest.

Hist ! what was that ? He was broad awake in an instant. There came a sound as of a door closing gently in one of the rooms below. He removed his slippers, and in his stocking feet stole noiselessly to the door, opened it softly, and listened. For a few seconds not a sound but Travers' regular breathing broke the stillness.

Could his imagination have played him a trick ? He began to think that such indeed had been the case. But no ! there came again the sound of a door swinging on its hinges. There was no mistake about it this time, and from the direction he judged it to be the dining-room door. Pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, some one was walking in the hall below.

He started towards the stairway. A loose board that he stepped upon creaked loudly. He stopped, and, hardly daring to breathe, listened. The foot-steps had ceased.

Suddenly Travers, whom he had left sleeping peacefully, was awakened by a piercing shriek.

He sprang to his feet, broad awake, to find himself alone. Picking up a candle, he rushed to the head of the stairs, where he found Wortley, with blanched face, peering over the banisters into the darkness.

"Quick, man," he cried in a choked voice, "she was in the hall, and has run into the dining-room."

This he explained as he rapidly descended the stairs with Travers behind him, shading the flame of the candle with one hand.

A moment later they stood in the dining-room. It was empty.

"She's in the back part of the house. Hurry, for heaven's sake."

Not a trace of a human being could they find.

"She must have gone out through the back door," said Travers.

Wortley reached the door first, turned the handle.

"Confound it!" he exclaimed, "it's locked!"

CHAPTER IV.

A MONTH passed away, and in that time, though Wortley and Travers had spent ten nights at No. 2, the mystery of Pauline had not been solved. Travers was beginning to find two nights a week in an arm-chair rather too much of a good thing, and declared the game hardly worth the candle.

Not so Wortley. Whether she were mad or not, the vision of that lovely, sorrow-stricken woman had taken such a hold upon his mind, that, do his utmost, he could not shake it off. Wortley was ten years younger than his pale-faced journalist friend. In years he was little more than a boy, and he possessed a boy's enthusiasm. He idealized his dark-eyed Niobe. Her appearance of distress would have been sufficient to enlist his sympathies, at any rate for a time, though I doubt if he would have sat up ten nights in the month for the chance of speaking with her, had she not possessed unusual beauty as well.

He grew restless and irritable. He smoked too many cigars for his own good. He played billiards too often, for it is thirsty work, and thirst is agreeably slaked with brandy and soda. Now brandy and soda form a delightfully refreshing beverage, particularly

on a warm night in spring. But too many brandies and sodas, combined with tobacco and late hours, are bad for a man. Sir Arthur combined all three, and consequently began to look seedy.—Q.E.D.

Travers also got seedy, but not from mild dissipation ; neither had pity for the mysterious Pauline anything to do with it. The long and short of it was he was overworked. He was naturally a delicate man, and, as is frequently the case, combined great mental powers and energy with physical weakness. Now, if a man writes from four to six hours a day, and keeps it up for several years, unless he has the constitution of a rhinoceros, he is pretty sure to break down.

For several months past Travers had felt that something was most decidedly wrong. His appetite was failing, he began to suffer from insomnia. He found greater difficulty in concentrating his mind upon his work, and felt that it was not so good as it had been : the vim that he had put into his writing a year ago seemed lacking. This last alarmed him far more, than sleeplessness or loss of appetite had done. Travers possessed good sound sense, as well as a classical education, and did not say to himself, as fools are constantly doing, “Pshaw, I’ll be all right in a little while.” He did not curse the climate. He said : “This sort of thing must not continue ; I’ll see a doctor,” which he accordingly did. He consulted Sir William Brudley, a leading West-end medical light.

Sir William sounded his lungs, punched him in

the small of the back, felt his pulse, looked at his eyes, poked an instrument down his throat, listened to his heart beating. Then he seated himself before his desk, stroked his chin, and looked exactly what he was, namely, very wise and kind, and thoroughly to be depended upon.

“Mr. Travers,” he said after a few moments’ pause, “you must go away at once. I will not say that you are very ill now, but you certainly will be if you remain here. You should take a three or four months’ sea voyage. If you can’t do that, you must spend the summer by the seaside, somewhere in the south. Live in the open air as much as possible and bathe in the sea. There is one thing you absolutely must not do,”—Sir William emphasized what he said by rapping the knuckles of his right hand upon his desk, “—you positively must not write more than two hours a day, and for the first month I strongly advise you not to write at all. You may read if you like, but hard brain-work of any description I absolutely forbid.”

This closed the interview. Sir William pocketed his fee, and Travers took his departure to prepare for his enforced holiday. A week later, he bid Wortley good-bye, advised him strongly to give up his pursuit of the mysterious Pauline, and took his departure on a sailing ship bound for the West Indies.

Needless to say, our hero did not follow his advice, but, as is the way with any young man worth his salt, listened with becoming respect, and then went

his way, determined to purchase experience at his own expense, and not live by the wisdom of others.

So Wortley was left to himself to unravel the mystery.

Now it so happened that the day after Travers' departure, while he was looking idly out of his sitting-room window, he noticed a black-bearded man in seedy clothes lounging along the further side of the street. When opposite his door he paused a moment irresolutely, then walked briskly across, mounted the steps and rang the bell. Tompkins opened the door, when Wortley's ears were immediately greeted by a harsh American twang, and the words :

“ Williams, old pard, how is things ? I guessed I'd find ye in an——” The remainder of the sentence he did not catch, as his interesting valet stepped outside, and closed the door after him.

“ Humph ! ” ejaculated Sir Arthur, seating himself. “ Williams and Tompkins, and Jake and Bill. Upon my honour, I ought to be congratulated on the possession of such a treasure. A precious rum lot, I expect. I suppose I ought to discharge the beggar. Sorry to do that, though, as he certainly is useful in his way, and the most honest scoundrel I ever knew.”

About five minutes elapsed ere the object of his reflections again entered the house, and when he did so, went directly upstairs. Sir Arthur walked over to the window in time to catch a glimpse of the back of that scion of the land of freedom, as he

turned the corner and disappeared. He then rang for Tompkins and seated himself.

Enter that worthy.

“Tompkins ! ”

“Yes, Sir Arthur.”

“You have had a visit from a friend ? ”

“A mere acquaintance, Sir Arthur.” With a lightning glance.

Sir Arthur lighted a cigarette, and puffed thoughtfully a moment.

“In England, Tompkins——”

“Yes, sir.”

“We do not as a rule keep valets with a plurality of surnames.”

“No, Sir Arthur ? ” Tompkins looked pensive.

“No doubt they are useful at times ? ”

“Remarkably so, Sir Arthur.”

“That reply was quite unnecessary.” (Tompkins looked wounded.) “England, Tompkins, is made up of a conservative people with old-fashioned prejudices. You touch that people in a tender part when you appear in the midst of them with several surnames. Englishmen, as a rule, are satisfied with one ; they become suspicious of a man who luxuriates in half a dozen. Being an Englishman, Tompkins, you will not wonder at my inheriting their national peculiarities. I am growing suspicious of you, Tompkins. To a man of your open and ingenuous nature that will doubtless be surprising.”

“Your suspicions hurt me, Sir Arthur, deeply,—very deeply.” A Church of England rector could

not have expressed more patient sorrow and long suffering in face and voice, than did Tompkins.

“You are not an Englishman, Tompkins.”

“No, Sir Arthur.”

“May I ask what you are ? ”

“An Australian, Sir Arthur.”

“Indeed ! ”

“And an American citizen, Sir Arthur.”

“Anything else ? ”

“A New Zealander, Sir Arthur, and I think I may lay claim to being a little bit of a Brazilian, Sir Arthur.”

“A cosmopolitan, in short.”

“Exactly so, Sir Arthur.”

“Then why affect the cockney, Tompkins ? ”

“Thought it more respectable in my present reduced circumstances, Sir Arthur.”

“*Reduced*, Tompkins, please.”

“Yes, Sir Arthur.”

“And how did you make a living before you came to England ? ”

“I mined in Australia, Sir Arthur, 'tended sheep in New Zealand, did odd chores in Brazil, and was a cowboy out West.”

“Then you can ride, Tompkins ? ”

“Just a little, Sir Arthur.”

“And shoot ? ”

“Just try me, Sir Arthur.”

“I ought to discharge you, Tompkins.”

Tompkins looked sad.

“But you're an honest rascal.”

“I try to be, Sir Arthur.”

“So I won’t this time.”

“Thank you, Sir Arthur.”

“You may go now.”

Exit Tompkins.

When he left Sir Arthur’s presence, he went upstairs to that gentleman’s dressing-room, where he had been brushing some clothes when Sir Arthur rang for him. Walking up to the glass, he contemplated his image in it for a few moments, and thus addressed it :

“You’re the stuff, old man. Tompkins, is it?—ha, ha, ha! Williams, is it?—he, he, he! Name it and I’ll give it to you. Spit on it and see if it will float. Williams, Williams, you’ll be the death of me. Can you shoot?—perhaps not.” Here he pulled a long face, and looked as innocent as a cat after stealing cream. He continued: “There’s plenty o’ sand on your neck, Tompkins, my boy, or Williams, or whatever in hell you call yourself. You ain’t the tenderfoot you look,—no, not by a darned sight.”

He turned away from the glass, and began industriously brushing a pair of Sir Arthur’s unmentionables. “And what little snide game are you playin’ a lone hand in,” apostrophizing the above-mentioned articles of clothing, “goin’ out nights in a respectable, genteel, little village like this ’ere London, with a Smith and Wesson in your pocket? Bein’ an American citizen,” mimicking Sir Arthur, “with a touch of the Brazilian, New Zealander, and Australian, you will not wonder at my inheriting their national

peculiarities. I am growing suspicious of you, Sir Arthur, and if I don't know what you're up to before I'm much older, I ain't a worthy son of my highly respectable papa—whatever he was." This last idea seemed to tickle him hugely, judging by his laughter.

The following day Sir Arthur got word from his steward, which necessitated his spending a week in the country. He left town on a Friday and returned the following Thursday, dined alone in his own house, giving Tompkins orders to prepare the usual necessaries for a night at No. 2, and at eight o'clock stepped into a hansom and drove rapidly away. Just as he started another hansom passed. It was empty. His valet signalled it.

"Follow the one that has just left," he said, "let it keep as far ahead as possible."

Away they went a hundred yards or so behind. When they turned into Morton Gardens, Tompkins saw the other hansom standing in front of a house a little distance ahead. Telling his driver to stop and wait for him, he alighted on the opposite side of the street, and walked leisurely up the pavement. After dismissing his hansom he saw Sir Arthur approach the door of a dreary-looking edifice. For fully five minutes Tompkins walked up and down, his head bent forward, his hands clasped behind his back, apparently in deep thought. The steps of some one approaching aroused him.

"Astley's, the old man's," he muttered. "What in the devil's name's Sir Arthur driving at now?"

He walked slowly back to his hansom. "Back again," he said to the driver and took his seat.

For several days after that, Tompkins was pre-occupied and thoughtful. He watched Sir Arthur, and listened with a curious expectant expression on his face to everything that gentleman said.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER Travers had taken his departure, Wortley almost made up his mind to take some other friend into his confidence. First he thought of Carew. But no, Carew would not do, he was too much of a boy. His way of looking at things was distinctly frivolous. He would have chaffed him for being in love with Pauline : he couldn't stand that. He was in love with Pauline ; that is to say, he was in love with a beautiful ideal being, whom in his youthful enthusiasm he clothed with a perfect halo of romance. He did not think—or if the thought did occur to him he promptly turned it aside—that the creature of his imagination might materialize into a mad woman. It was too horrible ; he would not dwell upon it. Reason uttered a thousand reasonable things, as is its way. Reason against love, reason against enthusiasm, reason against youth : what must be the result? Reason on the one hand—dull, cold, unfeeling reason. Radiant loveliness on the other, sympathy, real living passion, wonderful human nature. What, in Heaven name, is worth more? We are told that there are other things in life worth more. Reason tells us so. We sit with pretty Miss So-and-so in her mamma's drawing-room. We gaze into her deep, wonderful eyes, and

we doubt. Alas, for the wisdom of youth ! How much, my dear young man, would you be spared, could you but profit by the experience of others ! One woman closely resembles another, when all is said. She may be a little wiser, a little weaker, a little more foolish than her fellow. But on this you may wager your last penny, she is bound to be, in her way, equally exasperating, and the odds are a thousand to one she'll lead you a devil of a dance before you see the last of her—or of life. “Beauty is only skin-deep,”—wise, silly old truism. Until beauty appears shorn of that delicate covering, one-third of humanity will continue to love and hate the other two-thirds, but not till then.

The evening that Sir Arthur, followed by his valet, arrived at No. 2 Morton Gardens, he decided to make a slight difference in the order of his campaign for the night. Instead of watching in the upper front room, he decided to pass the night in the one directly below it, that is, in the library, as he judged it to be by the bookshelves. He brought the arm-chair downstairs, and with a travelling rug over his knees, another one at his back, his feet propped up on one of the dining-room chairs, two lighted candles to read by, and one of Black's delightful novels, made himself as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. The lack of a fire made the room less cheerful than the one upstairs had been, but, as the night was warm and superstitious fears no longer troubled him, he felt that a fire would only be a superfluous luxury after

all. The two doors into the room he closed, fearing that the light would frighten Pauline away, should she come that night. He became interested in his novel, and time passed rapidly. The church clock striking eleven recalled him to the present. He laid aside his book, pulled his watch out, and wound it up. Then he stretched himself, yawned, and clasping his hands behind his head, leaned back musing.

"What an ass I am!" he said. "I really think Carew would have been quite justified in laughing at me, had I been fool enough to tell him."

He grew restless and fidgety. The discomfort of sitting for several hours in a not too comfortable chair suddenly struck him. He was seized with a cramp in his leg.

"Confound it!" he exclaimed, rubbing that member; "hang me if I continue this little game much longer if the young woman doesn't put in an appearance. Deuced good mind to chuck up the business and go home."

He felt distinctly ill-used, snuffed the candles, which were beginning to gutter, and seated himself again.

Hardly had he done so, when he fancied he heard a light step in the hall. His chair was so placed that he sat directly facing the door leading into it. He listened. There was no mistaking it. Pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, came the sound of approaching steps, just as he had heard them before. The next instant the door-handle was turned, the door slowly opened, and

the mysterious Pauline stood before him. Sir Arthur, taken by surprise at the suddenness of her appearance, stared at her speechless. Her head was bare ; her dark hair, rolled in a thick coil on top, was held in place by a broad silver pin which shone in the candle-light. Over her shoulders she wore a loose cloak of a brown material, cut something in the fashion of those worn by cavaliers in the old days. And not unlike one of those gallant gentlemen did she look, with her beautiful pale face, half hidden as it was by a great collar of some soft fur. Before Sir Arthur had time to recover from his astonishment, she had closed the door and advanced to the middle of the room, where she stood looking at him, and calmly undoing the fastenings of her cloak.

Sir Arthur rose to his feet. With a quick movement of her shoulders, the cloak slid from them.

“Take it,” she said, in the most natural way in the world, holding it out to him.

At the sound of her voice Sir Arthur regained his self-possession ; that is, he knew what he was doing, though he felt as if he must be dreaming. He extended his hand to take the cloak, half expecting to encounter nothing but empty air. But no, so far it was real enough. He folded it carefully, and hung it over his arm. She now stood before him in a closely-fitting creamy white dress, with gold braid work about the bosom, and a big rolled collar edged with the same. Her figure was exquisitely moulded, slight and graceful. He noticed all this, as her

glance left his face and wandered over the room. Suddenly she knit her eyebrows into an angry frown, and stamped her foot upon the floor.

"I declare it hasn't been swept yet," she said, with a gesticulation of her hands.

"I beg your pardon," stammered Sir Arthur, not knowing exactly what to say.

"I say it hasn't been swept yet. Haven't you eyes? Can't you see?"

She extended one foot beyond her skirt, and drew the toe of her slipper—which Sir Arthur noticed had a big rosette upon it—for several inches over the floor, leaving a perfectly discernible track in the dust. He glanced at the tiny foot as it described a semicircle, then at her face, and his very soul was filled with sorrow.

"Travers was right," he murmured, "she is mad."

"I will see that it is swept," he said aloud, in a gentle voice.

"That is right," she said, and smiled entrancingly.

Sir Arthur made a mental vow that it should be done if he had to do it himself.

"But can I trust you to see to it?" She glanced at him suspiciously, and shook one taper finger.

"Yes, you may trust me," he replied.

She walked over to the arm-chair and seated herself.

"What a pretty rug!" she exclaimed, with the delight of a child. "Wrap it around me; I love pretty things."

Sir Arthur carefully placed his railway rug over her shoulders.

She sat staring at the candles.

“Candles!” she cried out—“always candles. When I go to church I see candles, great, long, white candles. I hate candles, I loathe candles, I abominate candles; I shall be driven mad by candles, horrid, sputtering things. Put them out immediately.”

Sir Arthur was at a loss; he stood still, undecided.

“Put them out—put them out!” She thumped with her little hands on the arms of her chair, “Do you want to make me cry?”

“No, don’t, please,” replied our hero, in an agony. “But we will be in the dark if I do.”

She grew calm at once.

“Then don’t put them out, you great, silly man.”

She examined him carefully from head to foot.

“You look sad. Now tell me,”—she put her head to one side and looked slyly at him—“are you the cook’s brother?”

This took Sir Arthur completely by surprise.

“Merciful powers, no!” he ejaculated.

“Now don’t get excited, silly man, for I know you must be one of three things, either the cook’s brother, or Susan’s young man, or the Queen’s godson. Now tell me which it is. I insist upon your being one of the three. You must, you must, you must.” She thumped again on the arms of the chair. “I hate mystery, so you must be one of the three—the cook’s brother, Susan’s young man, or the

Queen's godson. Quick, quick, quick, before I count five. One, two, three!"

"The Queen's godson," he cried hurriedly, and wondered if he too were going mad, or if he were dreaming. He would not be either of the other two for worlds. Again that heavenly smile.

"That is right," she said, "but you might have told me before; now I know who you are."

"Who am I?" he said, sighing. It was ridiculous of course, awfully ridiculous, but he could not have smiled to save himself. He seated himself opposite to her as he spoke.

She paid no heed to his question, however, but continued her rambling, disjointed speech.

"You know," she said, pulling at the corners of the rug with her little white hands, "I am living with the Duchess now. She's very funny, funny, funny, funny, but she doesn't seem to think so, and that's the joke, that's the joke. We used to play with the children then. One of them was quite big, but that you know is the Duchess; her head is as big as the moon, her nose like a red apple, and her hair, why, it's just like dried seaweed. And—and—I was going to tell you something, but I can't remember what it is." She passed her hand over her brow in a puzzled way.

Sir Arthur, with a stifled feeling in his throat, sat looking at her. He could not speak for pity. A cunning look came over her face.

"The silly old Duchess thinks I'm in bed, you know; but I assure you I'm not. You would like

to know what I've got in my pocket, now, wouldn't you?"

"Very much, indeed," said Sir Arthur.

"You won't mention it to the Duchess?"

"I promise you I won't."

"Well, I've got a key, a big yellow key—two keys."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; one for the Duchess's house, the other for my house. You know this is my house, and when the Duchess goes to sleep I get up. I never sleep, you know; only stupid people sleep. Now I will tell you something more, but you mustn't tell this to the Duchess either. I will tell you who I am." She rose as she spoke.

"Who are you?" inquired Sir Arthur.

"I am," she said, with a grand air, curtsying low, "the Lady Jane Grey."

Instinctively Sir Arthur rose to his feet and bowed.

"Then the wicked men came and took away my dear—ah! that is what broke my heart." She seated herself again, and bowing the beautiful dark head upon her hands, wept as though the poor bruised heart would break again.

"Don't, please don't," said Sir Arthur, with the tears running down his own kindly face. "I can't stand it, you know. Please, please don't, Miss—Miss Pauline."

At the sound of her name she started, and looked strangely at him through great shining dark eyes.

"Pauline—no, no. Poor Pauline died years and years ago. Why—oh, why do you speak of Pauline?"

"I am very sorry for poor Pauline," said Sir Arthur sadly; "you must tell me all about her."

"No, I can't,—I won't,—I won't," she cried excitedly. "You know the Duchess wouldn't like it. The poor dear Duchess thinks I'm in bed now,—ha, ha, ha!" Her laughter was sadder than her tears.

"But I will tell you something else."

"Do, please."

"But it's horrible."

"Then don't speak of it."

"Oh, but I must." She put her head on one side like a bird and looked at him. "I'm inclined to believe," she said, with a preternaturally wise air, "that you are really not what you seem."

"What do I seem?"

"Ah, that's it; that's just what I said to the Duchess last winter. We were out in the fields gathering wild strawberries, and I said to her: 'Duchess, doesn't it seem odd that strawberries should be ripe at this season?' And she said to me, —she—said—to—me—"

"What did she say to you?"

"You silly, silly creature." She turned to him with a quick, petulant movement. "How can I be expected to remember what she said to me?"

"I beg your pardon," said Wortley humbly; "it was very stupid of me to ask such a question."

"Very stupid,—very stupid,—v-e-e-r-r-y stupid,"

she sang, beating time to the air with her foot. "Don't cry, silly man," she continued, as though she were speaking to a child. "If it was naughty it won't be naughty any more ; no, never any more, and I won't tell the Duchess,—no, I won't."

"Please don't," said Wortley, for the first time smiling in spite of himself.

Suddenly her whole manner changed, a look of terror came into her face, the pupils in her eyes dilated and grew bright. She looked fearfully at the door into the dining-room. Noiselessly she rose to her feet, and stepped quietly as a phantom to Wortley's side. With her left hand she gripped his arm, and with her right gathered her skirts together, as though to race like a wild creature.

"Hush!" she said in a piercing whisper. Wortley, startled by her odd behavior, followed with his eyes the direction of her glance, and listened. Not a sound save the ticking of his watch could he hear.

"What is it?" he inquired.

"Hush!" she said again ; "he's in there. Don't you hear him, the wicked, wicked man? oh, oh, oh!" Stifled sobs. "Come, and we will peep." She drew him to the door and opened it an inch. "O-o-h!" she shrieked, the same fearful cry that he and Travers had heard before.

She flew to the other door, turned an instant, and beckoned to him. "Come," she cried, and ran through the hall like a wild thing, with Wortley following her. At the back door she stopped, all trembling, to search for her key. Wortley opened it with

his, and together they passed out into a sort of yard. A gate from this opened into a lane which led to the street. They were walking now. He drew her hand through his arm.

"You mustn't be afraid," he said in a gentle voice ; "I won't let anybody hurt you."

She glanced up into his face, and for a brief second the light of reason seemed to shine in her eyes.

"You are very good," she said in a low voice, and then became silent.

From Morton Gardens at the east end, Sedley Street runs at right angles to it. At the third house from the corner Pauline stopped. It was a big old mansion of three storeys, and stood in a terrace. There was nothing unusual in its appearance ; it looked comfortable and respectable, while the polished brass on the door gave it a prosperous, well-to-do air.

"This is where the Duchess lives," said Pauline, speaking for the first time since they had left No. 2. "I won't ask you in," she added, "because—because to-morrow will be Friday, and the Duchess might not like it." She took her key out, and put it in the keyhole.

"When shall I see you again ?" said Wortley.

"Ah!"—she nodded her head archly,— "I really don't believe you are Susan's young man after all." Click went the lock as she turned the key in it. She pushed the door open and entered.

"I vow I am not," said Wortley earnestly, but the

door closed ere the words were well out of his mouth, and he stood alone in the silent, deserted street. His breast was filled with conflicting emotions, as he returned bareheaded. Her cloak, hanging over the back of the chair where he had left it, was an actual shock to him.

The rickety old arm-chair where she had sat, and the rug that had covered her slender form, were hallowed to him now.

He had but to close his eyes, to see her standing in her pretty white gown with the gold braiding. He could hear the petulant words again : "I declare it hasn't been swept yet."

What terrible calamity had occurred to unhinge that gentle mind? The thought maddened him. Just God ! it was too cruel. Must she, so lovely, so pure, suffer through weary, changeless years? Justice thundered No : ten thousand times No ! But Pauline, the lovely Pauline, was mad. Ah ! there was the rub. Get over that little difficulty if you can, Sir Arthur Wortley ; and as he drove from the house in the morning, he vowed he would never rest until that difficulty was overcome, if science could conquer it.

CHAPTER VI.

SIR ARTHUR noted the number of the house where he had left Pauline. It was 37. Arrived at home, after a comfortable breakfast, he rang for Tompkins.

“A directory, Tompkins.”

“Yes, Sir Arthur.”

He turned up Sedley Street, and found that a Mrs. Vidal, widow, lived at No. 37. He wrote the name in his pocket-book. Tompkins, passing behind his master a moment later with the morning papers and letters, read the number of the page he was writing the address from, and made a mental note of it.

An hour later Sir Arthur, throwing aside his dressing-gown, attired himself for the day, and strolled to his club.

Tompkins, left to himself, first took up the directory, and turning to the page, ran over every name carefully. When he read Mrs. Vidal, 37 Sedley Street, a puzzled, thoughtful expression came over his face. “Mrs. Vidal! Mrs. Vidal!” he murmured, “where have I heard that name before? Devilish strange!” He leant his head upon his hand and stared fixedly at it. “By God! I have it.” He banged the directory upon the table, and jumped to

his feet. “It’s the woman that old fool Astley was in love with. I’d give something to get hold of that pocket-book of Sir Arthur’s.” He next went upstairs into Sir Arthur’s dressing-room, where he found the dressing-gown his master had thrown aside, across a lounge. He searched the pockets in the hope of finding the pocket-book there, but, alas ! was disappointed.

Throwing it down in disgust, he remarked in a cheerful, conversational tone, to himself, with a western nasal drawl, “Williams, Williams, old party, this ere life is growin’ interesting—darned interesting.” He then went into Sir Arthur’s sitting-room. One of those desks with a space in the centre for your knees, and drawers on each side, stood near the window. It seemed that morning as though the spirit of curiosity had taken possession of him. As he had once remarked to a pal of his : “There is times, Bill, when the longin’ to contemplate the contents of a closed drawer takes a powerful holt on me.”

Accordingly he opened every one, and they were all unlocked, excepting the top one on the left hand side. Taking a small steel instrument from his waistcoat pocket, he inserted it in the keyhole, worked it about for a moment, when the bolt shot back from its socket. Pulling the drawer open, he discovered in it a piece of faded blue ribbon, a lady’s driving glove, and a copy of Owen Meredith’s “Lucile.” Tompkins’ mind was not of that order that delights in either Art or Literature. It is quite within the

region of probability that he had never read that fascinating story ; possibly, too, had he attempted to do so, he would not have found it fascinating. He did not treat it with that loving tenderness with which the disciple of literature instinctively handles the meanest volume. He held it upside down, and turned a few of the leaves over by the aid of his thumb, which he first delicately moistened between his lips.

“Humph ! poetry !” he muttered. He could not have expressed greater, or more biting scorn had he exhausted his vocabulary of cosmopolitan simile in the attempt, and that is saying a good deal. Some writing on the title page caught his eye, as he was closing the book. Contemplative desire again “took a powerful holt” on him ; he turned the page and read “Pauline Astley, with her grandfather’s love. 16th October, 1884.” It is altogether likely that John Milton’s masterpiece would not have produced such an effect upon him. He actually turned pale. “Holy smoke !” he ejaculated, “this do beat the band.” Returning the book to the drawer, which he immediately closed and locked, he seated himself in Sir Arthur’s easiest chair, rested his head upon his hands, and gave himself up to silent meditation. Strange coincidence !—Sir Arthur in his club smoking-room at the same time was occupied in the same manner. Still a stranger coincidence, he was thinking of the same people, and was equally perplexed.

Somebody or other, I forget who, said that mankind is made up of two classes—those who play the

fiddle, and those who do not. I think this classification nearer the mark—those who smoke, and those who do not. A perplexed non-smoker either gnaws his nails, or becomes like a caged beast, and walks furiously up and down. A man who smokes lights his pipe or cigar, when, lo and behold ! his mind becomes tranquillised, he looks at things through the spectacles of reason, and through them he often sees his mountains dwindle into insignificant molehills. Insurmountable difficulties have the same miraculous way of disappearing, impossibilities become possible, nay, even probable. Oh, wonderful tobacco smoke ! Sweet minister to a troubled mind ! Comforter and consoler when all others fail ! Begone, you weak-headed milksops who turn with shrinking from its seductive charms.

Sir Arthur was perplexed, as I said before. Being a disciple of the weed, he turned for solace to that never-failing comforter, and his troubles found relief. On his way to the club, the idea of calling on Mrs. Vidal, without being able to give a satisfactory reason for doing so, seemed impossible. Now a great many difficulties in this delightful life are like nettles : touch 'em lightly and they sting ; take 'em by the horns, metaphorically speaking ; sit on 'em, punch 'em in the bread basket, and otherwise treat them with contemptuous familiarity, and where are they ? Simply nowhere ! they're squelched ! Now Sir Arthur felt that to call upon Mrs. Vidal and inform her that he'd had the pleasure of meeting Miss Pauline in the middle of the night,—without a *chaperon*,

horrors!—when she (Mrs. Vidal) imagined her to be in bed, might be a straightforward course, but hardly the one to inspire that lady with a joyful confidence in himself, and might lead to Miss Pauline's being so closely watched in future, as to make it extremely improbable that he would ever again meet her. The idea had occurred to him that No. 37 Sedley Street might be a sort of private insane asylum, and that if so he might get installed there himself on the plea of insanity. The idea was not a captivating one, so he wisely dismissed it.

When our hero entered the club, the smoking-room was empty. It was bright and comfortably furnished. There was a cheery appearance of open-armed welcome in the easy-chairs standing about. The very clock on the mantelpiece had a merry lazy tick about it that soothed. It had not that exasperating hurried manner that most clocks have which seem to say, "Hurry, hurry, young man; don't sit idle all day, dreaming and smoking, do something, do something, do something, tick, tick, tick, look how busy I am. 'Life is real, life is earnest.'" On the contrary, it said as plainly as though it possessed the power of speech: "Take things easily, young man, tick—tick—tick, life is beautiful, keep cool and enjoy it, tick, tick, tick." So Sir Arthur watched it through the smoke of his cigar, and smiled at its pretty, merry face, and felt comforted. He finished his smoke, rose to his feet with the light of purpose in his eyes. "I'll call on Mrs. Vidal," he said to himself, "this very afternoon, by Jove! and trust to the

inspiration of the moment, or to Providence, or anything at all, for an excuse for my visit. I must get to know her some way or other."

Accordingly, an hour or so after his luncheon, he drove to No. 37 Sedley Street, and rang the bell. The door was opened by a small boy in buttons.

"Is Mrs. Vidal at home?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir."

"Please take my card up, and ask if I may see her."

"Yes, sir."

Our hero was ushered into the drawing-room where he sat down feeling slightly nervous, and wondering what earthly excuse he could find for the occasion. A minute or two later, Mrs. Vidal entered. She was a tall, well-dressed, handsome woman, with a remarkably pleasing expression of face.

Sir Arthur rose to his feet. She walked quickly up to him with her hand extended.

"So you have at last found time to come and see me?" she smiled.

For a second Sir Arthur was almost paralyzed with astonishment.

"Stark, staring mad, poor creature. I must humor her." This to himself. Aloud: "I am sure I'm very much ashamed of myself, but you know, Mrs. Vidal, very few of us can call our time our own nowadays."

"Oh, of course not, you are such a gay lot." Mrs. Vidal looked at him with a curiously amused

smile. "Tell me," she said, "have you reached the summit of your ambition yet?"

Sir Arthur gasped, coughed, tried a conventional smile, failed, and in desperation turned his attention to the carpet.

"I see you have not," she continued, "and I am moreover inclined to believe that you have actually forgotten what that laudable ambition was." She laughed.

"Got 'em shocking bad. Poor thing!" to himself. "I—I—I am ashamed to confess that I—I am afraid I have," he stammered aloud.

"Do you mean to tell me that you have actually forgotten your resolve to become Prime Minister? You surprise me."

"I still have hopes, you know, but so far my country has not perceived my remarkable legislative ability. When it does," he laughed, "the rest will be plain sailing."

She did not reply at once, but sat, with the same amused smile on her face, looking at him.

Sir Arthur began to feel distinctly uncomfortable.

"I declare," she said at length, "you haven't changed a bit, or very little, in appearance."

"Very little, indeed," said Sir Arthur, with an attempt at jocularity.

"You're twice as big, of course."

"Three times I should think."

"Then you hadn't a moustache in those days."

"Not a hair."

"You know I met you in the park last Tuesday. I recognized you at once."

“Indeed, you don’t say so. I am flattered beyond measure.”

“I couldn’t catch your eye, or I would have bowed.”

“Heaven be praised!” fervently to himself. Aloud: “You should have poked me in the back with your parasol,” laughing.

“I certainly will, next time.”

“Thank you, little attentions of that kind from old friends tickle one’s vanity.”

“At the expense of one’s coat.”

“What is a coat in the cause of friendship?”

She laughed. “How delightfully refreshing! And yet old Lady What’s-her-name thinks gallantry is dying out in the present generation.”

“Lady What’s-her-name, pardon my saying so, is quite wrong there.”

“Or you have become the smallest wee bit of a humbug, Sir Arthur,” with a smile.

“That is cruel, Mrs. Vidal. You flattered me beyond expression a few minutes ago by telling me I had not changed. I am in despair.” Sir Arthur was beginning to enjoy the fun.

“If you recollect, it was in appearance only I said.”

“Ah, to be sure.” Sir Arthur glanced again at the carpet.

There was a pause, it grew lengthy, he looked up at Mrs. Vidal. She was again watching him with the same smile, which broke into a hearty laugh as she caught his eye.

"I'll wager," she said, "you've forgotten all about me?"

"How can you accuse me of such a thing?"

"Then tell me who I was when we used to know each other?"

"Easily," he said, still determined to humor her. "Either Mary Queen of Scots, or, perhaps, Boadicea."

He looked not impertinently at her as he spoke, but with a frank, kindly smile on his face, as though he had said the simplest and most natural thing in the world. He was quite convinced that he was in some sort of a lunatic asylum, and that the lady before him was simply a mad woman. He had an idea that most mad women, like many sane ones, have a decided weakness for titles, and generally adopt some historical name. Consequently, he thought he would be flattering her mad vanity by letting her think that he believed that she had been one of the two above-mentioned famous personages. Of course it was foolish and rash of him to jump to such a conclusion so rapidly, but then he was disappointed in his visit. He had hoped to find out something about Pauline, and, not doing so, grew foolish and rash in consequence. It irritated him slightly to find the mistress of a private lunatic asylum, from whom he had hoped to gain information of vital importance to his future happiness, a lunatic herself, and quite incapable of giving such information.

At his words Mrs. Vidal turned pale, and gave a

slight start. She seemed quickly to regain her composure, however, and summoned the ghost of her former smile to her face.

"How clever of you," she said, in a voice that trembled slightly, "how did you know?"

"Oh, I guessed it," said Sir Arthur airily—"saw it at once by your regal cast of countenance; but I want you to tell me which of the two you were, Boadicea or Mary Queen of Scots?"

"Why, Boadicea, to be sure. How could you mistake me for the other."

"It was stupid of me, I admit," he said humbly. "I have always been slightly lacking in discernment."

For a moment there was a pause, then Mrs. Vidal spoke again.

"May I—may I ask who you are?"

"Who I am?" With a swift glance at her, the scene with Pauline returned to his mind. "To be sure; why, I am the Queen's godson."

Mrs. Vidal laughed hysterically, then checked herself with a frightened look on her face.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she said, "but I—I thought you were."

Sir Arthur smiled encouragingly, then he rose, shook hands, and sadly took his departure.

CHAPTER VII.

AMONG Sir Arthur's numerous friends and acquaintances in London, there was a certain Lady Standish who deserves to be classed among his friends for the reason that she was generous to a degree in bestowing upon him gratis the most excellent advice in matters worldly, and never for an instant hesitated to tell him the plainest and most disagreeable home truths in the plainest possible language. She was a small, dark-eyed, fine-featured, white-haired woman of about fifty years of age, with a snappish tongue and a waspish temper. In her youth she had been a great beauty, and, as such, had been admired by Sir Arthur's scapegrace of a father, who had very nearly succeeded in marrying her, but not quite. For, with beauty, she possessed a certain attribute (not common in the sex), namely, sense. Harry Wortley's *carryings on* were pretty well known and freely discussed in her set, and they were not such as a right-minded young gentleman should have any reason to be proud of. So she did the wisest thing she could do under the circumstances, triumphed over what little love or liking she might have felt for that fascinating rake, and married a certain fat, middle-aged, wealthy baronet,

Sir George Valentine Standish, to wit, quite as stupid as he was rich, and as pompous as he was stupid, whose first really unselfish action since his coming into the world consisted in his going out of it five years after his marriage. Lady Standish's bosom friends said that it was her tongue that killed him ; she said it was the east wind ; possibly both had something to do with it. At any rate at the age of twenty-five, or thereabouts, she was left a widow with a comfortable income of £2,000 per annum. She might have married again : she had dozens of opportunities. She was besieged by young gentlemen with romances seeking consolation, who improvised charmingly, and elderly gentlemen without them, who did not improvise. Wearisome, drearisome politicians, and raving, long-haired poets who poured maudlin love in maudlin verse into her pretty ears, and talked insanely of some name or reputation they intended constructing in the course of a year or two.

To all of them she wisely turned a deaf ear. She accepted their foolish adulation for what it was worth, and enjoyed the fun, perhaps, somewhat better than they did. But matrimony—not if she knew it ! She had tried it once, and once for her was enough.

The day after Wortley's visit to Mrs. Vidal, as Lady Standish sat in a low chair before the cheery fire in her drawing-room, a visitor was announced. She turned her head slightly.

“ My dearest Kate,” she said, extending her hands

without rising, "I was just beginning to be bored by my own society. How good of you to come!"

The lady thus addressed was of middle age, or, perhaps, a little beyond it; a tall, fair, handsome woman with an abundance of light hair done up on the top of her head, and blue eyes beneath a pair of exquisitely pencilled dark eyebrows. She took the two welcoming hands in her own, and, stooping down, lightly kissed Lady Standish, who, after the salute, waved her to a chair.

"Sit down, my dear, and excuse my not getting up. I am lazy to-day, or perhaps the least little bit in the world rheumatic." She spoke in a vivacious manner, in a pleasant voice, though perhaps rather highly pitched.

Her visitor drew her chair forward to the fire, gave her skirt a little pull so as to expose, as well as two well-shaped feet, a pair of superbly turned ankles to the genial blaze, and leaning back, turned her face towards her hostess.

"I am sorry to hear that, dear," she said, in a full rich voice; "it is the hateful east wind that has been blowing for the last two days, probably."

"Oh, I suppose so," Lady Standish replied rather absently. Unlike the generality of old people, her ailments did not interest her to the exclusion of everything else in the world. In fact, she seldom if ever mentioned them, her theory being that half a woman's complaints were imaginary, and the less they were cuddled, so to speak, the sooner they disappeared.

For about twenty minutes the two ladies chatted together on different topics, not having the remotest bearing on this story, consequently not worthy of record here. At length there was a somewhat protracted pause, when the younger of the two suddenly said, looking fixedly at the other :

“By the way, I had a visit from Arthur Wortley.”

“Indeed! I wasn’t aware that you knew him.”

“I did from the time he was a baby till he was sent away to school at about ten ; since then, I have never seen him to speak to, till yesterday.”

She paused as if expecting Lady Standish to make some remark, but Lady Standish was apparently thinking of something else and remained silent.

“It is a terribly sad thing,” she continued.

“Terribly sad,—what is,—has the young scamp got himself into a scrape?”

Lady Standish was all attention at once.

“You mean to say you don’t know?” with a look of surprise.

“Heavens and earth, Kate, what’s he done? Run away with a ballet dancer?”

“Much worse,” sadly ; “but I certainly thought you would know.”

“I know nothing,—haven’t seen him for the last two months. You alarm me. What is it?”

“He’s as mad as a March hare!”

“WHAT?” Lady Standish sat bolt upright.

“Mad as a hatter!”

“Mad as a fiddlestick! Are you crazy, Kate?”

"You mean to say that he was not mad when you last saw him?"

"Mad! Merciful heavens, no. As sane as you or I. Whatever put such an absurd idea into your head?"

"Well, if he isn't mad, he's certainly very like it."

"Why?"

Then Mrs. Vidal, for it was none other, told her friend the whole story. She wound up by saying:

"His conversation was sane enough throughout, though perhaps a little flippant, till just before he went away, when he calmly informed me that he knew that at one time I had been either Mary Queen of Scots, or Boadicea!"

"Good heavens!"

"Yes; I never got such a shock in my life. If poor Pauline had not accustomed me to a person in that terrible condition I would certainly have fainted."

"What on earth did you do?"

"I at once concluded him to be mad and thought it safer to humor him, so I summoned up my sweetest smile—and you may believe me it was not very sweet—and said, 'How clever of you!' Then he insisted upon my telling him which of the two I had been, so I told him Boadicea."

"Extraordinary!"

"Awful, I think; he used to be such a nice bright boy; and I never knew of there being insanity in the family."

"Never that I know of, and I think I would have

found out from poor dear Harry, his father, if there had been. It's quite beyond me."

"But the queerest part of the whole affair is this, I asked him who he was, wondering if he had also forgotten his own identity ; and who do you think he said he was ?"

Lady Standish shrugged her shoulders.

"The Queen's godson !"

"Heaven be kind to us ! Good Lord !" Lady Standish positively gasped. "It's the most astonishing piece of news I ever heard in the whole course of my existence. I actually feel faint."

Shortly after delivering her extraordinary piece of news Mrs. Vidal took her departure.

Hardly had the door closed when another visitor was announced—a portly gentleman of about forty, Mr. Waters by name—a man with nothing earthly to do in life but dawdle through it, and quite satisfied with the occupation, or want of it. At any other time, Lady Standish would have been in despair at the advent of this personage, for he was a most successful bore. But to-day she was delighted to see him : for this reason, he and Wortley were members of the same club. If Wortley were as mad as Mrs. Vidal believed, surely one of the men in his own set, whom he met half a dozen times a week, would know something of it.

"Have you seen anything of Sir Arthur Wortley lately ?" she inquired after a few moments' conversation.

"Sir Arthur Wortley ! Yes, seen him several

times ; dined with him at Mrs. Fortesque-Smith's last night."

"Indeed ! How is he ? He is one of my particular friends, you know."

"Lucky fellow ; as far as I could make out, flourishing. He brought in the Yankee beauty we're all raving about."

"How very interesting ! I hope you are not raving about her too ? "

"Of course I am. We're all learning to 'I guess' and 'I say' and 'Happy to make your acquaintance, sir,' as her terrible brother says."

"Indeed, how very refreshing ! Are you picking up the accent too ? "

"Heaven forbid ! "

Lady Standish leaned her head on her hand, and gazed thoughtfully into the fire.

"So Sir Arthur Wortley is going in for the American, eh ? "

"I didn't say he was going in for her. I said he brought her in to dinner. Going in for her ! Not a bit of it. He's not going in for any one as far as I can make out."

"I heard some time ago that he was somewhat *épris* of Ethel Buckley ? " said Lady Standish.

"Don't believe it," replied Mr. Waters, "he isn't the marrying kind ; he knows when he's well off, you know."

"Thank you, Mr. Waters," with uncommon sweetness.

"Oh, come, I say, Lady Standish, you know."

"Why so many of the sex have wasted their affections on the lesser brutes, such as horses and dogs, perfectly, my dear Mr. Waters."

"That's rough on a chap." Mr. Waters looked uncomfortable.

"Rough on a chap,—rough on a chap! what a very odd expression. Is that one of the pretty American's, or her terrible brother's? Sounds more like the latter. I have heard of 'rough on rats,' but never of 'rough on chaps.' Her smile became awfully sweet. So sweet, in fact, that Waters trembled, and soon afterwards took his departure.

No sooner had he disappeared than Lady Standish, seating herself at a small writing-table in the corner of the room, wrote a short note to Sir Arthur, telling him she particularly desired to see him, and would he kindly call the day after to-morrow—Monday—at about three o'clock.

Monday arrived, and punctually at three Sir Arthur was announced.

Lady Standish, sitting bolt upright (in close proximity to the bell), received him with an arctic shake of the hand, and a not-to-be-mollified expression of countenance. So much so that our hero felt distinctly nervous.

"Humph." She surveyed him calmly from head to foot. "Don't stand fidgeting there; sit down." (N. B.—He wasn't fidgeting, but he was much too sensible to say so, and meekly seated himself.)

"A nice kettle of fish you'll have to fry! So you've been playing the fool lately, I hear."

"I beg your pardon." Sir Arthur flushed, and began casting about in his mind as to what he had been doing lately to get her ladyship's back up, as he irreverently termed it. "I am not aware of having played the fool lately."

"Humph!" Indignant snort. "You're not, eh. Then what in the name of common sense do you mean by frightening unprotected ladies nearly into fits? That is what I wish to know, and what I insist upon knowing."

Sir Arthur opened his eyes to their fullest, and stared at his questioner.

"Frightening unprotected ladies into fits!" He repeated her words in considerable bewilderment.

"Exactly so, stupid; frightening unprotected ladies into fits,—*fits* I say. Don't you understand English, or shall I repeat the question in French for your benefit?"

"It'll be quite lost if you do," he replied, recovering somewhat, "but upon my word of honor, Lady Standish, I don't understand you."

"You don't, eh? Now look here, Arthur, once for all, are you mad or sane?"

"I really believed myself to be sane on entering your drawing-room, but now, upon my word, I don't quite know what to think."

"Humph! Then what in the name of all that's miraculous do you mean by informing everybody that you are 'the Queen's godson'?"

If Lady Standish had suddenly turned into a monkey, or anything else equally surprising had happened,

Sir Arthur could not possibly have expressed greater surprise or confusion. He flushed a brilliant scarlet to the roots of his closely cropped hair, then turned pale.

“Now do you understand me?” said Lady Standish triumphantly.

“Who told you that?” he asked, rather savagely.

“Don’t you dare to speak to me in that tone of voice, you impudent young scamp.”

Sir Arthur was himself again; there came an ominous light in his blue eyes.

“Impudent young scamp,” he repeated slowly. “I am much obliged to you, Lady Standish.”

“Fiddlesticks! Now tell me what you mean by posing as ‘the Queen’s godson’?”

“Supposing the impudent young scamp refuses; he is quite capable of doing so.” Sir Arthur leisurely rose as he spoke, apparently to go.

“You are very like your father, my dear, when you get into a temper, but you’re not nearly as good-looking.” A gentler look came over the handsome old face.

“I never posed as a beauty.”

“Merciful powers! I should hope not. Now sit down, you silly boy, and tell me all about it.”

“But who told you that I posed as ‘the Queen’s godson’?”

“Mrs. Vidal, of course; Kate Vidal.”

“The devil she did! I beg your pardon,”—Sir Arthur coughed,—“but I am a little bit astonished.”

“So I perceive.”

“She’s as mad as they make ‘em.”

“Fiddle!”

“Possibly so ; but the fact remains the same, she’s mad.”

“Exactly what she said of you, last Saturday.”

“Of me ?”

“Yes.”

“Upon my word, I’m much obliged.”

“What else can you expect when you persist in playing the fool ?”

“Playing the fool ?”

“To be sure.”

“I play the fool ?”

“Of course, you exasperating lunatic, you play the fool, when you call on a lady and inform her that you are ‘the Queen’s godson.’”

“She informed me she was Boadicea.”

“When you insisted upon her being either that historical personage, or Mary Queen of Scots, what else could the poor woman do ? She couldn’t very well be both.”

“She talked the most utter drivel to me, asked me if I had reached the summit of my ambition, and when I politely let her see that I had not the remotest idea what that might be, she informed me that I had been ambitious of becoming Prime Minister of England.”

“Look here, Arthur, have you forgotten Kate Cavendish, the pretty, fair-haired young woman who used to romp with you when you were a child ?”

“Good heavens! is Mrs. Vidal Kate Cavendish?”

“She is.”

“Then my goose is cooked,” Sir Arthur groaned.

“Now tell me what led to this call and all about it, like a good boy.”

“I will,” was his reply, and he told the whole story about the bet with Carew,—everything, even including his interview with Pauline. He omitted, however, to mention his having rented the house.

“Kate should be told of that poor girl’s wanderings at night,” said Lady Standish.

“I suppose so,” Wortley assented, somewhat feebly.

“You might call and tell her the story. You certainly owe her an explanation of your absurd conduct.”

“Wouldn’t it be better for you to write first? She might refuse to see me, as she believes me to be a lunatic.”

“Very good, I’ll write.”

“Is—she hopelessly insane?”

“Pauline? Yes, hopelessly so, poor girl.”

“Is it hereditary with her?”

“Hereditary, no; it was caused by a shock. Her grandfather was murdered in one of the rooms of No. 2, where she used to live,—the dining-room if I remember rightly,—murdered by his valet or butler. She discovered his body; the sight terrified her to such an extent that she fainted away. She recovered her consciousness in a short time, but never her reason, poor child.”

“Horrible!” exclaimed Wortley.

“Ah, yes, Arthur, it was terrible. She was so clever and bright before. The only thing that we can hope for now is that she may die, poor pretty creature.”

“And was the fiend that committed the crime never punished?”

“Never; he vanished in the most marvellous manner, and has never been heard of since.”

Wortley rose to his feet.

“I must go now,” he said. “You won’t forget to write to Mrs. Vidal now, will you, Lady Standish?”

“Trust me, Arthur. Good-bye; be a good boy and come and see me when you have nothing better to do.”

“Could I have anything better to do?” he laughed, and bowing took his departure.

Lady Standish, left to herself, leaned back in her chair. A thoughtful expression came into her dark eyes.

“He’s got his father’s voice. Poor dear Harry, your kindness and generosity were your bane, you poor wrong-headed dear.” She sat up with a queer little laugh. “What an old fool I am, to be sure, but the boy with that voice of his brings back the old days,—dear old days. Heigh-ho!”

CHAPTER VIII.

AT eight o'clock on the evening of the same day that Sir Arthur called on Lady Standish, as he sat reading in his room, his valet came to him.

"If you please, Sir Arthur, a brother of mine arrived this morning from Australia, and wants me to come and see him this evening, if you can spare me, Sir Arthur."

Sir Arthur was an indulgent master, and besides he rather liked that peculiar valet of his, so he replied :

"Certainly, Tompkins. I am not going out myself and will not require you. Go, by all means."

"Thank you, Sir Arthur."

A few minutes later Tompkins left the house, and walked briskly away. He had scarcely gone any distance when an empty hansom passed, which he hailed. "To Morton Gardens," he said, stepping in. Apparently, he had entirely forgotten his Australian brother, or possibly he intended calling upon him afterwards. He seemed to be on particularly good terms with himself that evening, for every little while he would chuckle agreeably to himself, and rub his hands, as though in the enjoyment of some capital joke.

"So you don't want me at all this evening, don't you, ha, ha, ha ! Goin' to sit at home in the agreeable pursoot o' literatoor, ha, ha, ha ! Nice, quiet, respectable young gent. Hang me if I ain't a-gettin' domesticated myself. Goin' to see a brother from Australia, ha, ha, ha ! Williams, my boy, but you do be a nice, slick-tongued, smooth-spoken young man, you be, with all that ere paralyzing, fraternal solicitude, ha, ha, ha ! "

With such-like harmless little pleasantries Sir Arthur's promising valet whiled away the time, till the cab slowed up at the entrance to Morton Gardens.

"What 'ouse, sir ?" inquired his Jehu.

"Oh, anywhere ; this will do. I'll get out here."

Accordingly Tompkins alighted, tossed the driver a shilling, and strolled leisurely up the pavement in the direction of No 2. Arrived opposite the house, with a rapid glance up and down the street to see that no one was observing him, he marched boldly up to the front door, which he quickly unlocked by means of a piece of crooked steel—in all probability the same instrument with which he had unlocked the upper left hand drawer of Sir Arthur's desk. He seemed familiar with the interior, for he moved across the hall, and pushed the library door open before striking a light. He then lit a candle, which he drew, wrapped in paper, from his pocket. The first object that caught his eye was Pauline's cloak, where Sir Arthur had left it hanging over a chair, so that she might find it the next time she visited the house.

“ Humph ! ” he remarked, examining it. “ A entertainin’ of some gal ! That’s your little game, is it ? Always some blessed woman in every little racket. They do beat all.” He next noticed his master’s travelling rug and a novel lying on the floor, which he kicked contemptuously aside. Also two candles standing on one of the shelves. These he lighted. He then examined the front window, drew the bolt, and found that it would open easily, also the shutters. He next made a survey of the house, and returned with a bottle, half filled with excellent Scotch whiskey, and three bottles of soda water, which Sir Arthur had left in the upper front room. Seating himself in the arm-chair in which Pauline had sat, with the railway rug thrown over his knees, he mixed himself a stiff drink, and, being in a somewhat lazy mood, determined to take things easily for a time. If Sir Arthur was in the habit of meeting some woman here regularly, it seemed to him that he would have the place a little more comfortably furnished. That a woman had been there was pretty clear, or how account for the cloak ? Tompkins glanced round the room. “ It’s familiar lookin’, and yet agin it ain’t familiar. How well I mind the old man a-sittin’ jest about where I am,” soliloquised he, “ and the gal, that he was that proud of, she were a daisy, a fiery little she-devil, an’ no mistake. What eyes—Jerusalem ! I can most fancy I see ’em, black as jet, with a sparkle in ’em like sunlight for all the world.” Tompkins finished his glass. “ But what clean knocks me gally west,” he continued reflectively, “ is how in blazes did Sir

Arthur get holt o' that ere book o' rhymes of hers?" He brewed himself another drink. "Found it like enough in one o' the drawers upstairs." He raised his glass to his lips, and just in the act of drinking paused. Pit, pat, pit, pat, first faint then louder, as the sound approached along the passage. He laid the glass noiselessly down, and rose to his feet. "Some one comin', an' a woman at that, or I'm a bloomin' fool." The sound ceased outside the door leading into the hall. "Like as not the gal Sir Arthur's a-runnin' thinks he's here," said Tompkins to himself. He had no nervous fears; the thought of anything supernatural never entered his shrewd head.

The door opened, and Pauline Astley entered.

"The devil!" exclaimed Tompkins; his jaw dropped, and he stared at her.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Pauline, and danced across the room with a mad grace that would have bewitched an angel. "The Duchess thinks I am at home you know, ha, ha, ha!" She stopped suddenly and looked hard at the man before her. A troubled, half-frightened look came into her face. "Ah, you are not the same." She backed up to the wall, and leaning against it, stood trembling. Meanwhile Tompkins had recovered from his astonishment.

"You!" he exclaimed, rising to his feet. His thin, clean-shaven face looked cruel and pitiless in the candle-light. A devil incarnate would have felt compassion for her exquisite helplessness, one would have thought; but, alas! in this world there are men

more wicked than devils, and the man before her was one of those. Pity or fear he had never known. Tenderness, the desire to shelter the weak, had never found a dwelling in his heart. The girl's evident terror seemed to inspire him with a certain feeling of satisfaction. He looked curiously at her for a few moments ; perhaps her remarkable beauty appealed to him ; it would seem impossible it could do otherwise than appeal to any human creature. He advanced slowly towards her, a horrid smile upon his lips. When within a yard of her, he folded his arms and stood still.

“So, Miss Pauline,”—at the sound of his voice she shivered, and her great dark eyes grew darker, as they became riveted in charmed fear upon his face,—“you've come to meet your young man, have you ? Upon my word !” Her madness had not become apparent to him. “But I'm afraid, my pretty dear, Sir Arthur isn't a-comin' this night, so you'll just have to put up with me, my beauty.”

Silence, and the same terrified fixed stare were the only response ; he continued in a tone which he erroneously believed to be excessively tender :

“Come, come, you've no call to be afraid, if you'll only be accommodating and nice. I always did like that pretty face of yours, but hang me if I ever expected such a chance as this !”

With a sudden quick movement he leaned forward, and caught her slender wrists.

“Oh, oh, oh !” she cried with a little gasping sob.

“By Heaven ! you must kiss me.”

He drew her slowly towards him with resistless force.

* * * * *

Now, it so happened that Sir Arthur, half an hour after his valet's departure, began to tire of his book. He tossed it aside, grew restless, and, rising, began pacing his room.

“By Jove!” he exclaimed, “what's the use of attempting to read? I feel worried and anxious, though, upon my word, I don't know what I've got to be anxious about. I'll take a walk.” Accordingly away he went.

When he set out he had no intention of going to any place in particular; but just as the moth, we are told, is attracted to the flame, so, by some peculiar magnetism, Sir Arthur's steps turned in the direction of Morton Gardens. The same magnetism doubtless guided him by way of Sedley Street. There was a light in one of the upper windows. Lover-like, he gazed up at it for a few moments, wondering if it could be the room of poor Pauline. Then he wandered slowly on.

At the corner of Sedley Street and Morton Gardens there stood the regular corner lamp, and by its light he noticed a big brass plate, with the inscription “Dr. C. D. Ross,” in large letters, upon it. He read the name without interest and passed on. In a few minutes he was opposite No. 2.

He glanced curiously at the house where he had passed so many strange nights. An exclamation rose to his lips; he stood stock-still and stared!

There could be no mistake about it : through the chinks in the library blinds several rays of yellow light stole. There must be some one in the house. "Who," he asked himself, feeling strangely startled, "could it be?" No one had a better right than he to inquire into the mystery, and accordingly he determined to do so.

He walked quietly up to the window. There was a wide chink just about on a level with his eye, and looking through it, this is what he saw. The back of his valet—whom, by the way, he didn't recognize—and Pauline leaning against the wall. The light from the candles shone full upon her face, and revealed to him the look of terror in it. That was enough for Sir Arthur. Muttering something expressive of anything but good-will towards the man, he mounted the front steps, and as quietly as possible turned the handle. His valet had not locked the door on entering, and it opened, but, alas ! with a very audible rusty creak.

* * * * *

The sound of that opening door was heard by Tompkins. Loosening his hold upon the slender wrists, swiftly, panther-like, he sprang across the room to the window. With a quick wrench he pulled it open and stood waiting, his right hand in his coat-pocket. With a low cry Pauline fell, face downwards, upon the floor, and lay still. At the same instant the library door was flung open, and Sir Arthur entered the room.

For an instant, he stood motionless. His valet

drew his hand from his pocket with something in it. The silence was broken by the click of a cocking pistol. There is something very suggestive about that sharp metallic click,—something that at such a time will make the blood in a brave fellow's veins run like fire. As Byron says so feelingly, possibly speaking from experience :

“ It has a strange quick jar upon the ear,
That cocking of a pistol, when you know
A moment more will bring the sight to bear
Upon your person, twelve yards off or so.”

Pauline's figure stretched upon the floor was the first object Sir Arthur's glance rested upon. For one supreme moment he forgot all else. Rushing to her side, he raised her head and shoulders tenderly in his arms ; she moaned pitifully as he did so. Across her face, so still and white, a tiny stream of blood trickled from a wound a little above the left temple. In falling she had struck her poor head against the corner of a chair. Quickly and as tenderly as he had raised her, he laid her down. Tompkins with his left hand pushed the shutters open. Sir Arthur rose to his feet, his face pale as it was possible for it to become through the tan from many a good day's hunting. He faced the man before him. “ You, Tompkins, damn you ! ” he exclaimed, springing towards him. Quick as a flash, the revolver was brought to bear ; a ringing report crashed through the room. Sir Arthur felt a stinging sensation in his left shoulder, then he was within hitting distance

of his man, and struck at him with all the force of his right, with the weight of his body to back it—a blow that doubtless would have felled his adversary had it taken effect, but, alas ! it did not,—it missed him, clean as a whistle !

Now, apart from the worthy Tompkins being a good barber, he, to use his own expression, “knew a thing or two,” and one of the things was a knowledge of the art of self-defence. Sir Arthur was excited ; Tompkins was not. He never allowed himself under any circumstances whatever to become excited. It was “tryin’ to the constitootion,” so he said.

Against a cool head, and a muscular, practised arm, what was likely to follow ? Exactly what did. Tompkins dropped his revolver, jerked his head sufficiently to the left to allow Sir Arthur’s fist to pass over his right shoulder, and countered with all his force with his right. The impetus of the rush added force to the blow, which took effect between the eyes, and over our hero went prone upon his back, where, as Truthful James would say, the “subsequent proceedings interested him no more,”—at least, not for some moments. It was neatly and cleverly done, so thought Tompkins, as with a slightly amused smile he picked his revolver from the floor, and returned it to his pocket. Then he calmly drained the tumbler of Scotch and soda which he had mixed, prior to Pauline’s appearance, blew the candles out, and, without a thought as to the condition of his two unfortunate victims, jumped lightly from the window, and, so far as Sir Arthur was concerned, vanished.

from his world for the future, as completely as a puff of smoke.

When Sir Arthur came to himself, possibly three minutes later, he was conscious of a battered feeling about the region of the eyes, a singing in his ears, and an acute pain in his left shoulder. For a moment he did not realize what had happened, but sat in the dark staring stupidly out of the open window. Then like a flash he remembered all. "Pauline! Merciful heavens! what had become of her?" he asked himself in an agony of mind. For the time his aches and pains were all forgotten. He staggered dizzily to his feet; fortunately he had matches in his pocket. He struck one, and quickly lighted the candles. Pauline lay upon the floor as he had left her. A terrible fear took possession of him, she lay so still. Her face, turned slightly from him, rested on one rounded arm. Sir Arthur was distracted; he knelt by her side.

"Pauline," he said, "dear, dear Pauline, speak to me." He clasped one of her little hands in his, and began chafing it. Then he grew calmer all at once, and behaved like a rational being. Taking the railway rug which had been left in the room, he spread it upon the floor, then raising the slight girlish form in his arms, he laid her gently on the rug, and with his coat formed a pillow for her head. This done, he closed and bolted the window and blinds, and started at a run for Dr. Ross, whose name he suddenly remembered having read on a brass plate at the corner of the street.

Two minutes later that hitherto unheard-of medical luminary, a pale-faced, bright-eyed young man, was summoned from a very delectable supper of cold roast beef, brown bread, and a pewter of beer by an ear-splitting peal from the front door-bell. Softly murmuring “Hang it!” for he never for one instant imagined it to be a patient, he left his supper and hurriedly opened the door. On the step he beheld a young man of a villainous cast of countenance, in his shirt-sleeves. Said young man appeared agitated, also warm. (N. B.—Distance from No. 2 Morton Gardens to corner of Sedley Street 123 yards, time about twelve seconds. Is it any wonder?)

Agitated young gentleman—“Is Dr. Ross at home?”

Medical luminary—“I am Dr. Ross.”

A. Y. G.—“Then come on, no time to jaw.” Jerks M. L. into the street by the arm.

M. L.—“This is an extraordinary proceeding, sir,” very indignant.

A. Y. G.—“Hang it, man, come on.”

M. L.—“My hat, sir.”

A. Y. G.—“Oh, damn your hat, sir.”

M. L.—“Anybody ill, sir?”

A. Y. G.—“Half dead, sir,” with a groan.

M. L. and A. Y. G. break into a run, and a minute later M. L., considerably surprised at the situation, is bending over Pauline.

“She received a blow on the head in falling; I am afraid it is cut,” said Sir Arthur, in an agonized tone.

"The bruise on her head is nothing," said the doctor—"a mere scratch." He turned to Sir Arthur. "Is she subject to epilepsy?" he inquired.

"I don't know,—I—I really know next to nothing of her. Why?"

"This looks very like the beginning of an epileptic fit," he replied, as he passed his hand through her hair, feeling the skull with long sensitive fingers. "Extraordinary!" he exclaimed.

"What is it?"

"Her skull has been fractured."

"Good God! I understood you to say the blow she received was nothing."

"The blow she received this evening was nothing."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply that this is an old fracture."

Sir Arthur was silent.

"You don't know, of course, anything about a blow she might have received prior to this one—say, three or four years ago?"

Sir Arthur shook his head.

"The left side of her brain is affected," said the doctor, after a moment's pause.

"How do you know?"

"Look at her right hand."

Sir Arthur looked: it was twitching in a nervous, spasmoid manner.

"That tells me nothing."

"To me it speaks volumes." The doctor smiled superior.

“Wonderful!” exclaimed Sir Arthur. He was beginning to feel a remarkable confidence in this bright-eyed, pale-faced young man.

“Perhaps you can tell me whether her mind was affected?”

Sir Arthur nodded.

“Well?” said the doctor.

“She—she is mad.” Sir Arthur’s voice shook as he said the awful word. He turned his head away.

The doctor finished his examination of her skull at this point, and looked up. “Where does she live?”

“37 Sedley Street.”

“Excellent! You had better run for a cab.”

Away ran our hero obediently.

“It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good.” So says the proverb. Here was a wind that had blown not only a patient, but a remarkably interesting case into the hands of a remarkably clever young man. Ye Gods! it might be FAME?—intoxicating thought! Dr. Ross rubbed his well-shaped hands together, and contemplated the exquisite creature on the floor before him, much, I fear, as a botanist would a rare species of plant, with intense interest but no pity!

Fortunately for Sir Arthur, an empty “four-wheeler” turned the corner of Sedley Street just as he arrived there. I say fortunately, because the excitement over, as our hero left No. 2, he began to feel faint and ill. He noticed for the first time that the left side of his shirt was saturated with blood,

but he felt sure the bleeding had stopped, as his undershirt was sticking to his wounded shoulder. "No. 2 Morton Gardens," he said to the driver as he seated himself. He remembered nothing further for some time. On arriving there the driver was somewhat startled to discover his fare lying half on the seat, and half in the bottom of the cab, in a dead faint. Here is romance for you, here is chivalry—the hero fainting from exhaustion and loss of blood in his noble attempt to succor the heroine! Glorious! *Quelle situation!*

At length he partially came to himself. He was puzzled at first to know exactly where he was. The immediate past seemed a dream to him, dim and unreal. He heard a door closing; it seemed far away. A man stooped over him and said something. He tried to answer, but could not; the power of speech seemed to have deserted him. Next, he was aware of a jolting sensation, a feeling of movement. Curiously enough, though he knew that he was himself passing through some kind of experience, he felt as though he were some other person looking at his actual self from that other mythical person's standpoint. Reality shrouded in a mist of unreality, or, in other words, unreality staring rudely at poor reality through the wrong end of a telescope; consequently reality dwindled to insignificance, and seemed miles away. No sooner had the jolting begun than Sir Arthur became again unconscious. When he next came to, he found himself in a small bed in a bright though plainly furnished little room. On a table, near his

head, there was a bouquet of roses in a tumbler. In a vase in the window stood a bouquet of heliotrope. A picture of a scarlet-coated gentleman, mounted on an impossible hunter, jumping an impossible five-barred gate, occupied a conspicuous position on the wall directly facing him. Possibly, without being aware of the fact, for at least ten minutes Sir Arthur gazed upon this *chef d'œuvre*, and was moved to pity at the thought of the supreme anguish any horse of a well-regulated instinct would feel at being reproduced so painfully out of drawing.

Then the recollection of his little adventure at No. 2 returned to his mind. How was Pauline? What had become of her? But how was he to find out? that was the question. He attempted to rise, but discovered, much to his surprise, that he was too weak. There was no bell that he could reach; in fact, he could see none at all, so he shouted.

“Hullo there! I say, doctor! Hi there!” in a very weak, quavering voice. No answer.

Then he swore, quietly but firmly, with a like result as far as attracting attention went, but he felt distinctly relieved, as any properly dispositioned man would. Next, he did the wisest thing under the circumstances, coughed twice, scratched his right ear meditatively, yawned three times, and fell into a sound sleep.

When he awakened some three hours later, Dr. Ross was bending over him. He felt wonderfully refreshed.

“Hullo, doctor! where the deuce am I?”

"At No. 43 Sedley Street, and getting along famously, but you mustn't talk or excite yourself."

"Is—is she safe?" There could be but one she, so wisely concluded the man addressed.

"Right as a trivet, with her own people," he replied with a smile, "but you mustn't say another word. You will hear all about it to-morrow; now go to sleep, like a good fellow."

Sir Arthur, his mind relieved, was wonderfully obedient. He went to sleep and slumbered with amazing persistency till nine the following morning. On opening his eyes, the first thing he beheld was the doctor in a shabby-looking old dressing-gown, seated in an easy-chair reading. He laid down his book at a movement of his patient's.

"Well, how do you feel this morning?" he inquired.

"Fit as a fiddle, excepting for a slight soreness in my left shoulder."

"Hungry?"

"Ravenous."

"Capital; the shoulder is nothing, don't amount to shucks, a mere flesh-wound. How did you get it?"

Sir Arthur told him. As he finished speaking, his eyes wandered to the bouquets of heliotrope and roses. Their perfume was delightful. The doctor's glance followed his.

"From Mrs. Vidal, and the heliotrope came yesterday morning from your steward's wife in Devonshire, with numerous anxious inquiries."

“Mrs. Vidal?” Sir Arthur repeated in astonishment.

The doctor nodded. “Mrs. Vidal and a Lady Standish, I think her name is, call every day.”

“You are all too kind,” Sir Arthur murmured.

“Too kind!” The clever young man before him gave a curious little laugh. “My dear sir, I am a made man—through you.”

Sir Arthur smiled incredulously.

“When you are well again, Mrs. Vidal will receive you with open arms. The young lady, Miss Pauline, is saved, thanks to you.”

Sir Arthur gave a great start. “Saved?” he exclaimed, turning pale, “what do you mean?”

“She is perfectly sane.”

“WHAT?”

The doctor repeated what he had said.

“Thank God!” exclaimed Sir Arthur, with tears in his eyes. “But tell me all about it, it is glorious!” In the exuberance of his joy he held out his hand. The doctor wrung it.

“My diagnosis was correct,” he began with pardonable pride. “I suggested a certain surgical operation, the trephining of the skull, that is, cutting a hole in it” (Sir Arthur shuddered), “just over the affected portion of the brain. She had an epileptic fit just as you left to get a cab. I expected one by that nervous twitching of the hand. That same twitching located the lesion. I got her safely home. Sir William Brumley was sent for, and we had a consultation. He agreed entirely to what I

suggested. The following day, a surgeon was called in, and a portion of the skull removed, which disclosed a thickening of the *dura mater*. This pressing upon the brain caused idiocy. The surgeon removed it; the cure of her mind was instantaneous. She will recover from the operation in a week or ten days more, and be as sound in mind and body for the future as you or I."

"Miraculous!" exclaimed Sir Arthur.

"Not at all, simply scientific," said the doctor, smiling. He took up his book, and began reading again.

Sir Arthur lay still, silently thinking; he had ample food for reflection. The doctor spoke again.

"She is overcome by grief at the death of her grandfather, poor girl."

"But that happened years ago."

"To her those years are a blank. It is just as though it happened yesterday."

"Poor girl!"

"I remember a case in one of the hospitals. A man had his skull fractured from a fall, just as she had. He was in the act of speaking when he fell. For five years he went about, an idiot. The same operation was performed on him. His cure also was instantaneous. The first words he uttered were a completion of that sentence begun five years before. To him time had stood still. What do you think of that?"

CHAPTER IX.

At the distance of about 6,000 miles from foggy, merry England, *via* New York and the Canadian Pacific Railway, on the western slope of that great range of mountains, which, like a backbone, runs from north to south along the continent of America, lies a level track of country named the Sumass Prairie. In extent it is about thirty miles long, varying from two to five miles in width. The rapid, muddy Fraser River forms its northern boundary. It is situated in British Columbia, fifty miles from the Pacific coast, and within easy reach of the United States boundary line. Herds of cattle make pretty blotches of color in the brilliant green of the prairie, while their distant lowing is carried to your ear on the breeze. Flocks of geese, widgeon, and mallard frequent the numerous sloughs which wind serpent-like everywhere. Occasionally, the jingle of spurs breaks, with a not unmusical sound, the wild quiet of the place, as a Chinook Indian, or a devil-may-care looking cowboy, sitting well down in the great Mexican saddle, looking as though he were part of the horse, with long stirrup and loose rein, loops past on his wiry little *cayuse* (native horse). What a picture he is in his ragged shirt, (the brim of his soft felt hat shading the weather-beaten face,) .

with his heavy top-boots, and clinking Mexican spurs, an inch and a half in diameter. They are the men that can ride, those thriftless, excitement-loving western nomads.

Fine fellows they are too, many of those cowboys, splendidly reckless, magnificently careless of the future. Boon companions round the cheery campfire, good at a song, and better at a yarn, my heart yearns for your kindly company again, dear rough-visaged, gentle-hearted friends of the past.

Two miles or so beyond the west end of the Sumass Prairie, at a junction of a branch line of the C. P. R. with one of the American Roads, a number of frame buildings and log shanties had been erected. It was the beginning of what the Yankees term a "live town," and was peopled, as such places invariably are, by gamblers, loafers, thieves, land-sharks—in short, by blackguards of every description, and possibly by an honest man or two, but the last is doubtful. This sink of western iniquity was grandiloquently called Sumass City, and there were three ways of approach to it from Sumass Prairie, namely, by the C. P. R. branch line, by a bush road a short distance to the east of the line, and through the woods. The third way none but a madman or a criminal would willingly attempt, having the choice of the other two.

About a month after the events of my last chapter occurred, on a beautiful day in the early part of June, a man mounted on a piebald *cayuse*, with a Winchester rifle resting across the pommel of his saddle,

rode slowly along the bush road towards Sumass City. The rider was a tall, strongly built man, with a thin, keen-looking face, of the complexion that always goes with red hair, an abundance of which he had, covered by a soft felt American slouch hat. His lips were thin and cruel in expression ; his eyes, of a watery gray-blue color, were set a little too close to a prominent and slightly aquiline nose. The day was warm, and, being in the shadow of the trees, he took his hat off and rode along bareheaded, by doing so exhibiting to the passer-by, should he encounter one, a certain peculiarity, namely, a round patch of white hair, just over the left temple.

About half way from the prairie to Sumass City, the road crossed the U. S. boundary into the State of Washington, or Washington Territory, as they still continue to call it in the West. Within fifty paces of the line, on the Canadian side of it, there is a small frame house, in front of it a garden, and dividing the garden from the road, a rough snake fence.

Leaning on the fence was a tall, handsome, lean-visaged, dark-bearded man, talking to a woman who stood at the door of the house, with a baby in her arms.

The man was standing with his back to the road, so that, though he must have heard, he could not have seen the approaching horseman without turning round.

“ Then, in came Dan,” he was saying—his accent was refined, his voice soft and pleasing—“ in his

stocking-feet, so that his wife never heard him, and as for Stevens, he was so occupied in vowed eternal love for her, that he never noticed him either, until he was within six feet of the two."

"An' you mean to tell me," exclaimed the woman excitedly, "that that mean, white-livered sneak never let on?"

"Never mentioned a syllable."

"The dirty beast!"

By this time the horseman was within twenty feet of the man standing by the fence, when he turned, and the eyes of the two for an instant met. In the glance of the latter there was a good-natured expression of lazy indifference, as he turned once more to the woman, and continued his conversation. The face of the other, on the contrary, betokened for an instant a startled recognition.

He rode on without a word, however, until he turned the next bend in the road, when, bringing his hand down on his knee with a sounding thwack, he exclaimed :

"By God! it's that devil Sladen. I must have changed considerable in the last ten years, for he didn't know me."

"An' then he struck him?" inquired the woman, while the sound of the piebald's hoofs grew fainter in the distance.

"Yes, with the pick-handle, just as Stevens turned, one blow. Knocked him senseless, and then chucked him out of doors, and left him lying there."

"Mercy on us, did he kill him?"

Sladen shook his head. "No fear, only stunned the beggar; he came to, half an hour later, and crawled off."

"He done right. I knowed that Stevens would come to grief some day, he was that wild, an' when I heerd he was follering Dan's wife, I sez to Billy, sez I, 'I guess it 'ill not be long, Billy, afore Dan gits on to that fool Stevens, and, when he does, there 'ill be hell to pay, see if there won't,' sez I. An' I was right, Mr. Sladen."

"You were, Mrs. Briggs, right as usual. I must be off now." He turned to go as he spoke.

"Hold on, Mr. Sladen, there ain't no call to be in such a mighty hurry. Do you mind the man that passed a minute ago?"

Sladen nodded.

"He's a stranger to these parts, I'm thinking. Did you ever see him before?"

"Never," said Sladen. "Good-day." He raised his hat politely, and turning, walked rapidly away towards Sumass City.

Sumass City is built on a flat, boggy stretch of land; in fact, that part of the West is all either rock, mountains, or swamp; its principal thoroughfare is planked, the others are mud-holes, neither more nor less, with little islands formed by stumps and roots of great pines. Facing one of the principal stores in the place is a restaurant, with the sign over the door in straggling letters, "California Dining-Room." Into this, half an hour after bidding Mrs. Briggs good-day, Sladen entered.

“How do do?” said the proprietor, a greasy, unhealthy-looking individual, in appearance a cross between a Dutch Yankee and a German Jew.

Sladen nodded, without replying to the salutation, and glanced quickly round the room, as he hung his hat upon a wooden pin. At a small table by himself sat the red-haired stranger, who had arrived a few minutes earlier. He started on Sladen’s entrance. Sladen, however, took no apparent interest in him, seating himself at another table nearer the door; he glanced down the bill of fare, and gave his order to a red-complexioned damsel in startling attire, who had approached his table, and stood eyeing him from a pair of remarkably handsome, bold, black eyes.

Sladen’s meal consisted of a slice of potted meat, some hot cakes, and a pint of lager beer, and he finished it just as the stranger finished his.

The two men walked out together and crossed the road to the store, where Sladen invested in a corn-cob pipe, and the stranger bought some chewing tobacco.

“How far is it to Finley’s camp, do you know?” inquired the latter of the shopkeeper.

“About four miles, I guess.”

“Which is the best way to get there?”

“Follow the street down to the cross-loggin’, then turn to the left, and down it, till you strike the line; follow it to where the first ‘*skidway*’ crosses, turn to your right, and down it, and if you’re reasonable lucky and don’t get tangled up with them other

'*skidways*'—an' they're thick as hairs on a dog's back—you're liable to reach Finley's. But you'd better get some one to show you the way. One o' Reilly's boys'll show you for a matter of '*four bits*.'

"Where'll I find Reilly's boys?"

"I'll show you the way." The speaker was Sladen. The stranger for a single moment looked as though he might decline the offer. Apparently, however, he thought better of it.

"Thanks," he said. "But ain't I putting you to a good sight of bother?"

"Not at all, not at all," was the reply. "I haven't anything to do this afternoon, and, moreover, I intended goin' to Finley's myself."

"You're a stranger in these parts," said the store-keeper, who possessed in an enormous degree all the inquisitiveness and ill-breeding of that class of Americans.

"I am," was the reply.

"Goin' to stay?"

A shrug of the shoulders.

"Where did ye come from?"

"Wyoming."

"Raised there?"

"Were you?" turning on him with a lightning glance; then, without waiting a reply, he spoke to Sladen. "We may as well be movin' if you're ready, mister," and together they left the store.

"Short, almighty short," murmured the store-keeper sadly, turning leisurely to another customer.

" You had better put up your horse," said Sladen to his companion, " we will go more quickly on foot, the roads are so infernally bad."

" All right, but where can I leave him ? "

Sladen accordingly showed him the stables, and twenty minutes later they were picking their way between stumps and mud-holes along the streets, so styled by courtesy.

There was little said between the two till they had left the line and were walking along the "*skid-way*." Then the stranger spoke.

" Walking's dry work, partner, where can I get a drink ? " he said.

" We will pass a spring in a few minutes," Sladen replied.

" What's your opinion of the city ? " asked the stranger a moment later.

" They're *booming* it just now."

" I guessed as much. I reckon it'll be like most along the coast."

" Exactly ; a junction and a few miles of farming land won't make a town, any more than a harbor where there's no inducement for shipping, and a railway station will—more than that is wanted."

The stranger nodded. " That reminds me of a yarn I heard down Oregon way. It was in the northern part where the line runs through one of the most God-forsaken bits of waste land I ever set eyes on. Can't raise a blessed thing but cactus to save your immortal soul, but it's a pure garden for that. A stranger got off at a little way station ; his eyes, nose,

an' ears were chuck full o' fine sand, an' maybe that made him feel a bit down on his luck, seein' as he weren't accustomed to luxuries o' the kind. The agent, who'd lived there for years breathin' sand, and somehow grew fascinated with the life, sidled up to him. 'Fine growin' weather,' he said. The thermometer, by the way, was about 102 in the shade, and the near cactuses looked twice their size in the quiverin' heat.

" 'Can't see much to grow,' sez the stranger surly like. 'Thar ain't much,' sez the agent, 'but that ain't the fault o' the weather.' 'No,' sez the other, coughin'. 'You don't seem took with the place,' sez the agent, shifting his chew. 'I ain't,' sez the other, a-tryin' to pick a little real estate out o' his eyes. 'I ain't sayin' the place is perfect, it has its wants like other places; it ain't heaven.' 'What does it want?' sez that other, sarcastic like. 'A little water and a little good society,' sez the agent, kind o' sadly, for he seen the other weren't struck all o' a heap with the town, and it pained him. 'That's all hell wants,' sez the other, walkin' off."

Sladen laughed. "This place also has its wants, particularly one which he doesn't know of yet," he said.

They had reached the spring now; the stranger knelt, and took a long drink ere replying. Sladen meantime seated himself and did an odd thing while the other man's back was turned: he took from his hip-pocket a revolver, laid the hand holding it upon his knee then taking his hat off, which was the

ordinary broad-brimmed American felt, covered both hand and weapon up with it, and when the other turned to him he was languidly mopping the perspiration from his forehead with a red cotton handkerchief in his left.

The stranger seated himself on a log about ten feet distant.

“ And what is that ? ” said he.

“ The ridding of the West of one of the worst curs, liars, and cowards that ever had the sense to leave it, and the folly to return, ” was the reply, spoken in the gentlest voice imaginable, with a smile bright as August lightning. A curious look came into the stranger’s face ; his lips closed in a thin pale line. He answered in a hard tone :

“ A liar perhaps, but, by God ! neither cur nor coward, Mr. Sladen.”

Sladen, beyond that same awful smile which lit up his keen dark eyes, showed no surprise at the man’s addressing him by name.

“ I repeat it, a coward, a damnable coward, ” in the same gentle voice. “ Wait, ” he said, holding up his hand as the other began to speak. “ You told your story ; it’s my turn now. In 1881, in the northern part of this state—— ”

“ At Sandy Bottom, to be accurate, as the noospapers say, ” remarked the other, with a wicked grin.

“ Thank you, at Sandy Bottom, my step-brother, Arthur Sladen, was mining with one Jake Williams. They were partners for a year, and in that time

made some four thousand dollars apiece,—they did well."

"Darned well!" remarked the other. "I mind the time."

"Jake Williams murdered my brother—for what? For four thousand dollars in gold dust."

"I've known men murdered for less," said the other, breaking a twig from a bush, and reflectively chewing it.

"Where did he go then?"

"To Montana, where he took ill."

"But did not die?"

"I guess not."

"Blackguards like Williams die hard."

"Now, partner, you're talking; but hold on: if you knew all this, why didn't you hang him?"

"What evidence had I?"

"Jake Williams was too clever for you." He langhed scornfully.

"I don't think so," with the same bright smile.

"Perhaps you know Sandy Bottom?"

"Perhaps, I do."

The two men were looking steadily into each other's eyes now.

"You were at Sandy Bottom at the time?"

"I was."

"You knew Arthur Sladen?"

"Well, I guess so."

"You admit that Jake Williams shot him?"

"I do."

"Then he went abroad?"

“He did.”

“I believe he went to——”

“England.”

“Where, doubtless, he committed other crimes?”

“I reckon he might ‘ave.”

“And then?”

“To Australia, where his luck was hellish bad, then back to London,—curse you!”

“And why back to London?”

“God knows!—he had a nat’ral aptitood for gettin’ into messes; too sentimental for his trade, a over-powerin’ desire to look on old scenes, I guess; can’t make it out no other way. Oh, his luck was as bad as you yourself could have wished it,—curse you!”

He seemed to feel a peculiar satisfaction in making his enemy his confidant. There was silence for a few moments. The two men sat looking at each other. Then Sladen spoke again:

“He was a vile coward and hateful murderer!”

“By God, he was no coward.”

“Is that all you have to say, Jake Williams?”

“I’ll speak, by God, till my tongue rots in defence of my courage; and act, too. And now, Mister Sladen, what will you do, we are here man to man?”

“Thank God, we are,” still in the same quiet, level tones. “What will I do?” He rose to his feet as he spoke, threw his hat to the ground, and deliberately cocked his revolver. “This; as justice in the United States costs too much for my purse, I will take the law into my own hands.” He raised his revolver as he spoke.

"Stop!" cried Williams. Sladen lowered his weapon.

"I want to ask you one question."

Sladen nodded.

"When you were leanin' agen the fence talkin' to that woman, did you know me when you looked up?"

"I did," was the reply.

"You always were the coolest devil west, but I didn't take you to be as smart as that." With a sudden, quick movement, he sprang to his feet; like lightning his hand flew to his pocket. Sladen fired, Williams staggered, a low, sobbing cry broke from his lips, but he did not fall. For a second the smoke of the discharge hung between the two. It cleared. For one second there was silence. Both with levelled weapons faced each other, and two reports rang out like one!

Williams turned half round and fell without a moan, with a bullet through his brain. Sladen sank slowly to the ground, and half lying, half sitting, with his back against a log, remained still but for his heavy, labored breathing.

Slowly the lagging hours dragged on. Lower, lower sank the sun, the shadows grew deeper. A cock-of-the-woods flew by with jerky flight, uttering its harsh cry. A squirrel jumped on a stump hard by, looked on the dying and the dead, screamed pitilessly, and fled away.

In a blaze of amber and of gold the sun sank. The shadows of tall pines mingled, and darkness, like a

cloak, fell upon the wilderness. The pure white stars came out to look upon the world. Sladen's head fell heavily forward upon his breast. His soul had fled to answer before the Judge of all for that high-handed deed.

* * * * *

Thus fell Jake Williams, *alias* Mitchell, *alias* Tompkins, Sir Arthur Wortley's clever valet.

CHAPTER X.

MEANWHILE, where is my commonplace hero? The poor silly man. Where heroes, commonplace or otherwise, insist upon getting at least once in a lifetime. Where you have been, kind, elderly reader! doubtless, before you were so very particular about your dinner. Before your waistcoat was quite so expansive as it is now, my dear sir! or your hair quite so thin. Where in all probability you are now, my pretty dear! or imagine yourself to be. In a fool's paradise, to be sure.

Oh, delicious youth! oh, illusive springtime! what would we not all give to return to you? How gladly would we exchange our worldly knowledge (some of it, my dear) for a little of your worldly ignorance. There were giants in those days; yes, sweet innocence! and angels, too, and upon my word of honor,—though the cynical will laugh loudly at the idea,—I verily believe there are angels still.

And so believed Sir Arthur. But that young man's opinion is not worth the breath expended in giving it utterance, for the simple reason that he is hopelessly, idiotically, madly in love. Unhappy, happy young man! He is going to make a name for himself, oh, yes. He will get into Parliament, to be sure. Washington Irving says idle young men fall

into one of two evils, drink or politics, very likely both. Then why in the name of common-sense should not love-sick fools take to the latter? When men are free to choose between two evils they generally hit upon the greater.

He brings her flowers every other day, the extravagant donkey! His happiness depends upon a smile, a frown. Oh, misery! The enchanting little witch doesn't know her own mind for ten minutes at a time, and changes it a dozen times a day. He sees her three times a week.

On Tuesday she is enthusiastic about some social lion she has met the day before. He is grand, he is magnificent, he improvises delightfully, he was pleased to remark to Mrs So-and-so, who told Miss Somebody, who told me, that he would like to know Miss Astley better. That Miss Astley's expression was sorrowful; that Miss Astley's smile was lingeringly sweet.

“Confounded impudent dancing-master!” exclaims Sir Arthur.

“You don't like him because he writes the sweetest verses in the world and you can't.”

“Nonsensical, maudlin drivel, about sunsets and flowers.”

“You're narrow-minded.”

“I narrow-minded?”

“Yes, yes, yes, you narrow-minded.” She stamps her little foot. “You think because a man can't ride, can't shoot, isn't brutally healthy, he isn't fit to speak to.”

Silence.

“He’s very clever,” with a far-away glance. “I do admire clever men.”

Silence.

“Oh, if you’re going to sit there without saying a word, with a great long face, you had better go home.”

“What shall I say?”

“‘What shall I say?’ Heavens! how entertaining! Talk, talk, talk,—for pity’s sake be amusing, or get away, and don’t come near me any more.”

“I’ve a good mind to take you at your word,” with intense gloom.

“Oh, lovely, lovely! The silly man is actually going to leave me.” She claps her hands. Then she forgets all about his coming departure.

“Let me tell you something more about my lion,” she says.

“Oh, bother your lion!”

“I won’t; he’s nice.”

Exit Sir Arthur shortly afterwards, madly jealous, vowing vengeance, praying heaven that he may meet the lion, and that the lion will be rude to him, so that he may punch the lion’s head in good old English fashion.

Friday evening. The witch is in a heavenly humour; Sir Arthur is entranced. She allows him to draw his chair one inch nearer hers than she ever did before. She informs him that she met the lion that very afternoon, that he would insist upon reciting some of his own poetry to her, that she thought

the verses silly and the poet sillier, that she does not believe him to be a lion at all, but only a great donkey whom the ladies have covered in a lion's skin and taught to roar, that she cannot endure men who either write or recite poetry, that if Sir Arther ever does such a thing he must never, never, never dare to speak to her again.

"I vow I will not," exclaims that young man ecstatically. She smiles angelically. (N. B.—He couldn't, and she knows it.)

"You've changed your mind about that gentleman," says he.

"What's the good of a mind of your own, if you can't change it?" says she.

"To be sure," says he.

"I'm a goose," says she.

"An angel, not a goose," says he, with his soul in his eyes.

She flushes, and looks lovelier than ever, if it were possible.

"If you're going to be silly you must go home," says she, "and when I say I am a goose, I am a goose, so there!"

"When she won't, she won't and naught can mend it,
And when she will, she will, and there's an end t' it," *

hummed Sir Arthur.

"Perhaps you think yourself clever, sir?" says she.

* These two lines, correctly quoted, are :

"For if she will, she will, you may depend on 't ;
And if she won't, she won't; so there's an end on 't."

"I was not thinking of myself, madam," says he with an eloquent glance.

"Now you must go home at once, for you are getting silly," says she. But she smiled as she said it, and home went Sir Arthur happy.

Sunday afternoon. Appearances were decidedly favorable. She looked as though she might be heavenly sweet again. Two days in succession?—wonders will never cease. Had Sir Arthur been a little less blinded by his feelings he would have seen at a single glance that she required delicate handling. But no; the stupid fellow was so overcome by joy at such unexpected sweetness, that he must needs blunder. Now if there was one person in the world the depth of whose character he believed he had sounded and understood, that person was Miss Pauline Astley. As luck would have it, my absurd hero never made a more gigantic mistake in his life. I verily believe there never was a man born into the world who could understand any woman, least of all the woman he loved. The wisest of all men, Shakespeare, says:

"O most delicate fiend!
Who is it can read a woman?"

and he never said anything wiser.

Sir Arthur had studied Miss Pauline carefully; that is to say, he had gazed admiringly at her on every possible occasion. Her good qualities were magnified in his eyes; her bad ones, if she possessed any,

and it is possible she may have, he completely overlooked. From observation and study of her character Sir Arthur was clear on two heads, namely :

No 1.—That she hated flattery. Stupid ! That she might have his, is possible, for he laid it on with a trowel. Properly administered, was there ever a woman yet who couldn't swallow it wholesale ?

No. 2.—That her taste was perfect, particularly in hats. Possibly : it isn't worth troubling about.

Sir Arthur seated himself, gazed admiringly at her, and smiled. Item : she had on a new dress.

Convinced of her hatred of flattery, he determined to score a point, eyed her critically, and began :

“ New dress ! What extravagance ! ”

“ Yes, it's quite a dream in its way.”

Anybody but an utter noodle could have seen she was pleased with it herself, and would have acted accordingly.

“ It's very pretty indeed, but I don't care so much about the upper part of the dream.”

“ MY TEA JACKET ! ” Her dark eyes flashed, and her right foot began to tap the carpet. Sir Arthur felt uncomfortable, made a desperate rally, and tried to hide his discomfiture with a laugh and brazen it out.

“ Is it a tea jacket ? ”

“ Heavens ! ” Up go her eyes to the ceiling.

“ I don't like it.”

“ Barbarian ! ”

“ Am I to be polite or truthful ? ”

“ Polite always.”

“Oh, Miss Pauline.”

“Oh, Sir Arthur !”

“I thought you detested flattery ?”

“I love it.”

“I believe you are vain.”

“What insight ! Have you only just discovered it ?”

“I had hoped otherwise.”

“Mercy on us, how foolish some men are !”

Silence.

“Ethel Bentley copied my tea jacket, but it doesn’t suit her : she looks a fright.”

Silence.

“Oh, the entertaining man ! Another long face.”

“Why are you so cruel ?”

“I cruel, and I allow you to see me ?”

“You are an angel !”

“Don’t you dare to make silly speeches to me, sir.”

“You said you loved flattery.”

“I hate it.”

“You’ve changed your mind again.”

“And suppose I have, sir : it’s my own.”

“Dear me, I wish I knew what to think or do,” in a distracted tone of voice.

“You’re stupid to-day. Go home.”

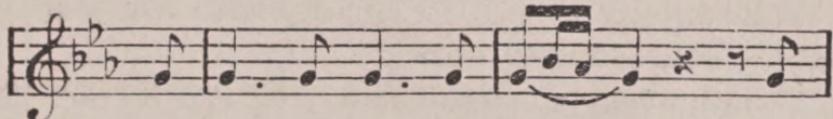
“Oh, Miss Pauline !”

Miss Pauline pulls one of Sir Arthur’s roses to pieces and sings :

“ Voici l’instant suprême :
L’instant de nos adieux !”

“ Must I really go home ? ” The great goose is in the very-depths of woe.

She nods, stops singing, and whistles :



“ Yes, go,” says she. “ I hate you to-day.”

Sir Arthur rises to his feet.

“ Good-bye,” he says, and holds out his hand. Miss Pauline makes a movement as though to take it, then checks herself.

“ No,” says she, “ I don’t think I’ll shake hands with you to-day.”

“ Why not ? ” with considerable surprise.

“ Oh, just for a change,” says the witch.

Sir Arthur looks hurt.

“ Oh, you’re such a goose,” says she ; “ you shake hands so, you bow so ” (imitating him). “ Go home, stupid.”

“ When may I come and see you again ? ”

“ I don’t know. Go home, go home, go home.”

“ I’ll come to-morrow ? ”

“ Don’t you dare. Go home.”

“ The day after ? ”

“ Oh, I suppose so. Go home.”

Exit Sir Arthur, distracted, miserable. Was there ever such a donkey ?

Yet this exasperating creature could be sweet, loving, divinely gentle if she liked. Clever too she was, clever as she could be, and she sang like a nightingale ! Men have made fools of themselves

over women who couldn't hold a candle to this one in any way. So, perhaps, Sir Arthur's infatuation isn't so extraordinary after all.

The summer passed away ; my hero was jealous, happy, distracted, by turns.

Then he had a magnificent row with her. She told him never to come near her again, and he vowed he'd take her at her word, and accordingly went away, and the second day he wrote and asked to be forgiven.

It was she who ought to have asked forgiveness.

The third day he called. Her high mightiness condescended to be sweet.

Then Sir Arthur—wise donkey that he was—lost his head perhaps a little, for her sweetness was intoxicating.

“ I wish I were great, and famous, and clever,” said he.

“ Why ? ” said she.

“ Because then I would tell you I loved you,” said he ; “ as it is, I know you can never love a great goose like me.”

He looked at her mighty earnestly as he said this, but her head was bowed so that he could not see her face, but could only sit in hope and fear for a few moments.

Then she looked up flushing, lovely as a summer morning, with a radiant light in her dark eyes, and on her sweet lips a radiant smile.

“ I think I could love a great goose,—a little,” said she.

“ My angel ! ”

“ If he were nice,” said she.

“ I am nice, dear Pauline.”

“ Conceited thing ! ”

“ You must love me a little, you know.” The great goose took one of her pretty white hands and kissed it, which proves him not to have been such a great goose after all.

“ Must I ? ” says she, with the same entrancing smile, but she did not withdraw her pretty hand.

“ Yes, Pauline, I think you must, my dearest.”

“ But I can’t make up my mind while you are holding my hand, sir.”

“ Then I will make it up for you, my angel.”

“ But what will it be when it is made up, since you are so kind ? ”

“ That Beauty must love her great stupid Beast.”

“ If Beauty must, she must, I suppose,” says she, and the witch gave him her other white hand, and a smile still more ravishingly sweet than any she had ever yet bestowed upon him.

* * * * *

After this the days as they passed were neither noted nor numbered by Sir Arthur, for in heaven, I am told, time is not reckoned ; it is, as it should be, made for the angels, and not the angels for time !

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